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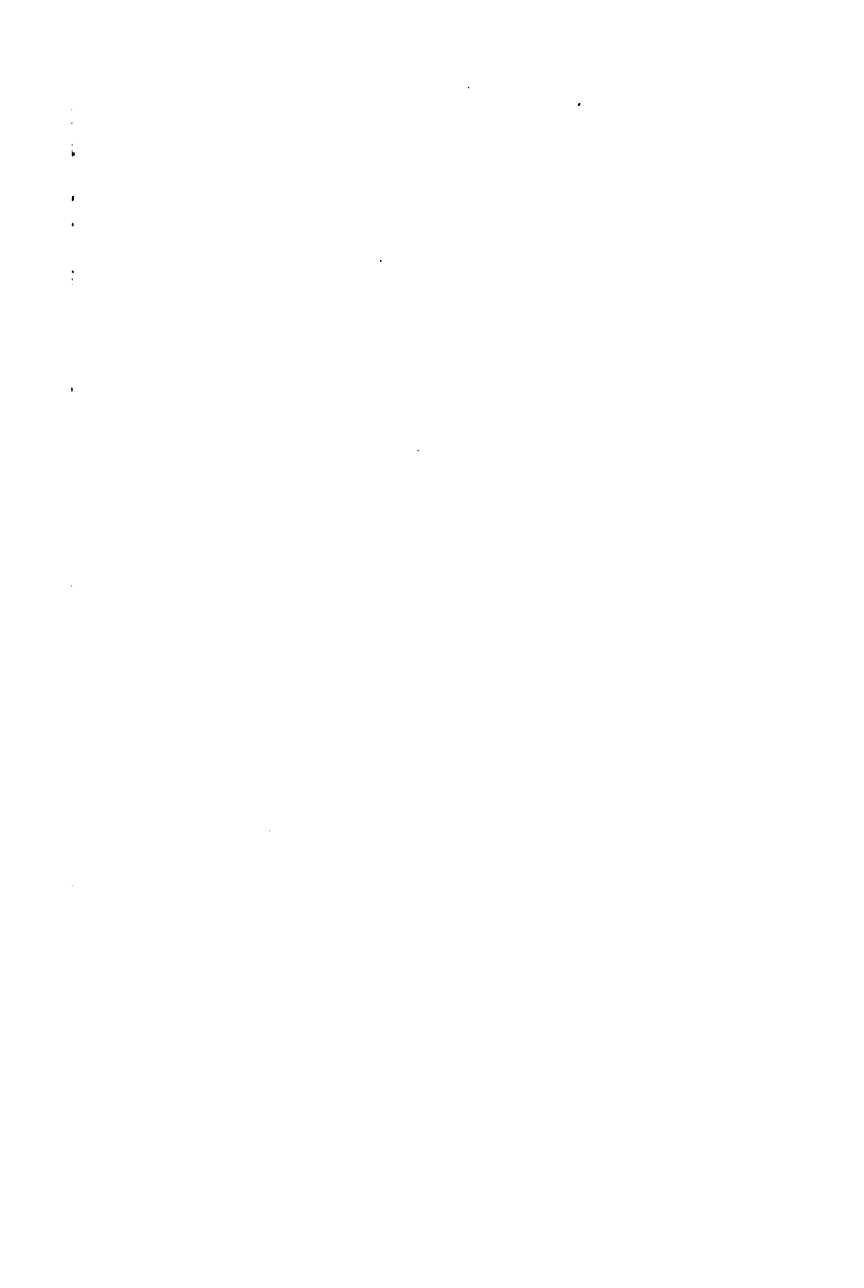


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EDMUND SPENSER.

From the oil painting by Benjamin Wilson, *c.* 1770 (after the lost original),  
at Pembroke College.

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Bell's Miniature Series of Great Writers,

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# SPENSER

BY

REV. W. TUCKWELL, M.A.

AUTHOR OF "CHAUCER."



LONDON

GEORGE BELL & SONS

1906



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## CHRONOLOGY

Spenser born, 1552.  
Merchant Taylors' School, 1563-4?  
Entered Cambridge, 1569.  
B.A., 1573.  
M.A., 1576.  
Resident in London, 1579.  
"Shepheards Calender," 1579.  
With Lord Grey to Ireland, 1580.  
Kilcolman, 1586.  
Visits London with Raleigh, 1589.  
First three Books of "Faery Queene," 1590.  
Return to Ireland, 1591.  
Married, 1594.  
"Faery Queene," 2nd ed., Books I-VI, 1598.  
Kilcolman burned, 1598.  
Died, 1599.

# EDMUND SPENSER

## LIFE OF SPENSER

THE Italians of the fourteenth century ranged seven contemporary poets as a Pleiad in their literary firmament. Such limitation would be impossible in the England of to-day. From our five centuries of poetic achievement at least twelve great names stand out, full orbéd, large, and lustrous, as to whose relative precedency may be room for diverse judgement, but all claiming and receiving place in the catalogue of Immortals. Some, as Spenser, Shakespeare, Milton, hold rank above the rest. We should all close the list with Tennyson, should all open it with Chaucer. Chaucer unified the English language and created English Poetry. Even as he passed away, the impulse which he had given was arrested by foreign and domestic discord. Driven from England by the Religious, the French, the Civil wars, the Muse betook herself to Scotland. King James I cites Chaucer as his master; Henryson, Holland, Blind Harry, David Lyndesay, were his imitators; Dunbar and Gawain Douglas maintained across the Tweed the current he had generated; but for a hundred

years from Chaucer's death little or no poetry was produced in bleeding and exhausted England. A few fine ballads are ascribed to the later part of the century; but in sustained and serious verse "the noon of Chaucer is followed by the gray afternoon of Lydgate and the dull twilight of Occleve." Under the strong hand of the Tudor sovereigns the land regained repose, and the long silence was broken by the Satires of Skelton, the Allegory of Sackville, the Amourist verse of Surrey and of Wyatt. All these were hopeful essays of tentative but unpractised genius; the higher literary art of Chaucer, suspended through the fifteenth century, was at last revived by SPENSER.

Edmund Spenser was born in or about the year 1552; born in London, as we know from himself:

At last they all to mery London came,  
To mery London, my most kyndly nurse,  
That to me gave this Life's first native sourse,  
Though from another place I take my name,  
A house of auncient fame.

Of his father we know nothing; of his mother only that her name was Elizabeth; but he claims kindred in the lines above with the Spenser family, afterwards Spencers of Wormleighton and of Althorp, already high in rank and "of auncient fame." To the youngest daughter of Sir John Spenser, Alice, afterwards Lady Derby, he dedicated his "Tears of the Muses"; before this lady and her son-in-law Milton's "Arcades"

was performed; her granddaughter, the Lady Alice Egerton, heroine of "Comus," became the Lady Carbery who upon the decline of the royal cause sheltered Jeremy Taylor in her home at Golden Grove; this one illustrious family linking together three great and widely parted names.

Spenser was educated at the Merchant Taylors' School under Dr. Mulcaster, who is said by Warton to have been a careful teacher of the English language; he had as schoolfellows Richard Hooker and Lancelot Andrewes. In the May of 1569 he was admitted Sizar, or inferior scholar, at Pembroke Hall, Cambridge, supported there by benefactions from the munificent Nowell family, and befriended by the late Master of the College, Grindal, then Bishop of London. If the translations from Petrarch and Du Bellay published in his Works are his, he had already, as a schoolboy, tried his hand on not unmelodious verse, and attained considerable proficiency in both the Italian and the French languages. It was a time of storm and stress both within and without the University. In the year of his matriculation occurred the great Rising of the North; in the previous year Mary of Scots had been imprisoned at Fotheringay; in the year following Pope Pius V issued his Bull of Deposition against Elizabeth, and his emissaries were preaching everywhere that the Queen was illegitimate, and that the English throne belonged to captive Mary. Within the University, Cartwright, Margaret Professor, was



not only denouncing the received church ritual and order, but propagating political opinions such as no civil Government could tolerate. This conduct led to his expulsion two years later, and ultimately, while it enriched our literature with the "Ecclesiastical Polity" of his great opponent, Hooker, impelled Elizabeth's advisers into what Green calls the worst blot upon her reign, their establishment of the High Commission Court.

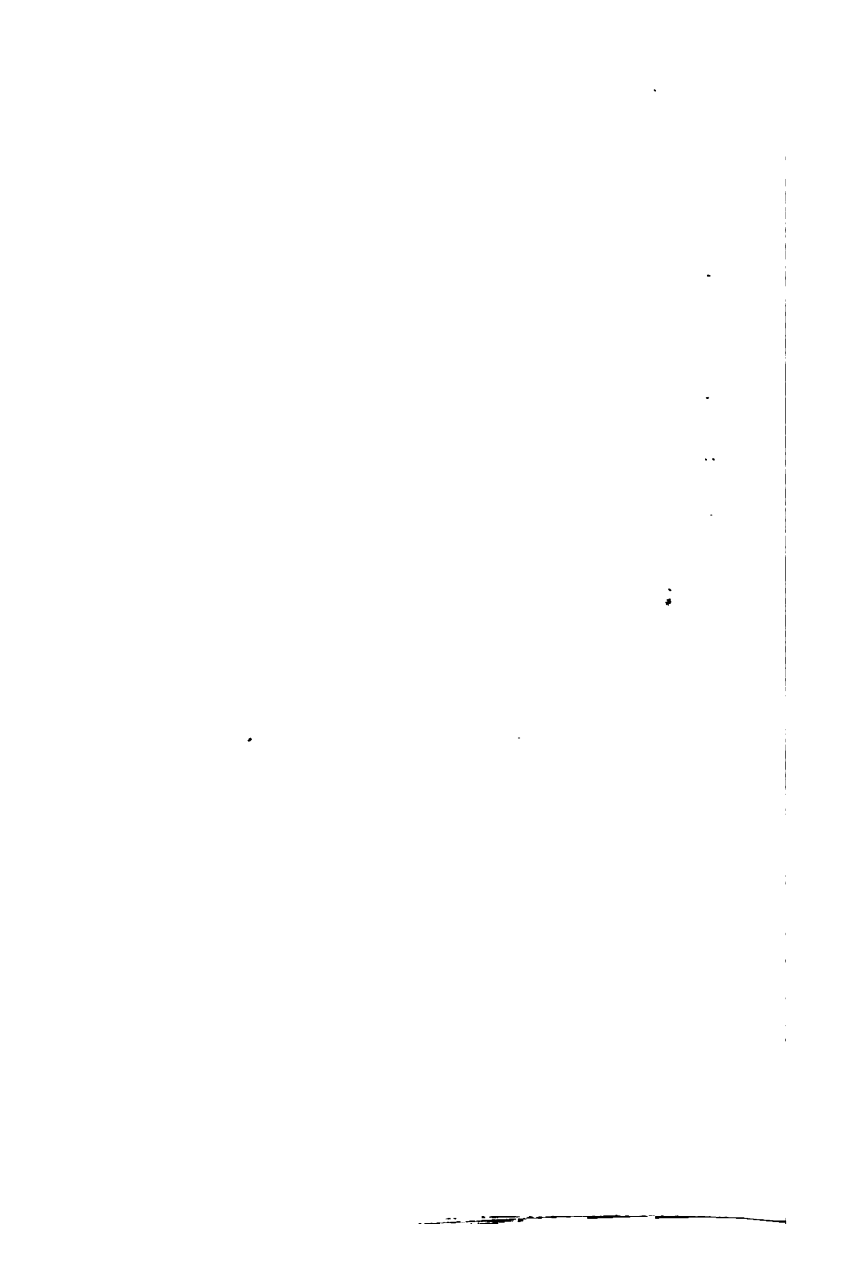
It was an atmosphere not favourable to the development of a dreamy, meditative young poet; of its effect upon him we can only guess. His allegiance to Alexander Nowell, and his devoted attachment to Grindal, whom his poetry celebrates affectionately as a model Christian pastor, leads us to rank him with the "conforming Puritans," as they were called, who trod peacefully the cool, sequestered middle way between Geneva and Rome. He was a Puritan only in his negation of Papal rule; the stern austerities of Calvinism were to his taste no more than they would have been to Chaucer's. At Cambridge, however, he formed two intimate friendships: with a younger student, Edward Kirke, who edited his earliest works; and with Gabriel Harvey, Fellow of Pembroke, and a lecturer at Trinity Hall. Harvey was a learned, pedantic, amiable, absurd college Don, of the sort described by Sir Thomas Overbury thirty years later as a "Meere Fellow of a House." Intellectually, the intimacy was perilous, for Harvey had thrown himself eagerly into the effort which

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marked the earlier English Renaissance, and which, though fortunately defeated, has left abiding traces on our literature; the attempt, namely, to "reform" English verse by imposing on it the laws of classical metres. It was accepted cordially by Sidney and the wits who followed him, and for a time persuaded Spenser to an artificial style, retarding and cramping to his genius.

He left Cambridge in 1576, is lost to sight for three years following, and re-appears in London at the end of 1579, as a dependent friend and follower in the household of the Earl of Leicester. Two events of vital moment to his poetical career mark this period of obscurity. He fell in love—deeply, lastingly, unsuccessfully—with a lady of whom we know only that her name was Rosalind. And he was admitted to friendship with the finest gentleman of his age, representing all of purest and of noblest in that strangely mingled time, Sir Philip Sidney, then at the height of his influence as courtier, wit, and statesman. To the effect upon his nature of these two events—to the deep emotion and the delicate tender fancy developed in a sensitive soul by first and passionate love, and abidingly kept fresh by the pangs of unrequited love—to the high ideal of perfect manhood, dignified, simple, courteous, religious, self-respecting, pure, generated by daily contact with a living exemplar of the type, we owe the exquisite womanhood and the chivalrous knightliness of the personages in the *Faëry Queene*; we owe Una and Belphœbe and Brito-

mart and Florimell; we owe Arthur and Artegall and the Red Cross Knight.

These years of obscurity were by no means idle, for in the last days of 1579 appeared the "Shepherd's Calender." It was published anonymously, but with some remarkable pages of dedication to Gabriel Harvey, bearing the initials of Edward Kirke. They confidently announce the advent of a poet fit to rank with Chaucer, as discerning and relying on the wealth and power of our English language, of late undervalued and disparaged by comparison with classic tongues and metres. Admiring the intelligent prescience of these Cambridge admirers, we remember how, exactly two hundred and fifty years later, his college friends at the same University discerned the excellence of another young and unknown poet, and persuaded the author of "Ænone" and the "Gardener's Daughter" to give his earliest poems to the world. The "Shepherd's Calender" was anonymous, but its author soon became known, at once found himself famous, and was everywhere spoken of as "the new poet." His work gained the approval of Sidney, and the warm praise of the Court critics. He had justified the favour of his powerful patrons, and they were not long in pushing his fortunes. In the summer of 1580, Lord Grey of Wilton was sent as Lord Deputy to Ireland: he was the friend of Sidney and of Leicester, was himself a literary man; and he took Spenser with him as his secretary.

The history of Ireland in the sixteenth century

is written in letters of blood. On one side was a native population dispossessed of homes and lands by a forced system of English colonization, torn further by internal feuds, united only in hatred of the Saxon. On the other side were the English conquerors, divided among themselves by antipathies, jealousies, mutual distrusts; agreeing only in common scorn and loathing of the Irish. The Irishman saw in himself the undoubted heir and rightful owner of his native soil usurped by a tyrannous intruder; from the English point of view he was a noxious wild beast, to be exterminated in the interest of order, law, society. So sword, gallows, famine, mercilessly slew their thousands; yet enough chiefs and kernes remained to hide amid hill fastness and pathless forest, and to break forth in organized rebellion when a year or two of apparent peace had lulled the English garrisons into security. One great Englishman after another came as deputy to essay the thankless task of pacification, to wreck his reputation and break his heart by cruelty which missed its aim; to be hampered by slander and detraction at the hands of nominal supporters and subordinates; disapproved, recalled, and often punished, by the imperious, faithless mistress who had commissioned him. In 1580 Desmond's rebellion had broken out; the whole South of Ireland was in a flame; Spanish and Italian adventurers were landing with arms and stores, the English Governors were powerless, and Lord Grey was sent to their aid. A practical soldier, he was also a bitter Puritan; in

his nature racial arrogance was supplemented by religious hatred; he saw in each Irish rebel not only a wild beast but a Popish beast; announced himself, with a mixture of classical and scriptural imagery familiar to the time, as a Perseus clearing the land of vermin, and a Joshua fighting the battles of the Lord. For two years he waged relentless war; then, with mutual dissatisfaction between himself and the home Government, was recalled, sending in as the summary of his unfinished campaign a list of "1,485 chief men and gentlemen slain, not accounting those of meaner sort which were innumerable." Through all this carnage Spenser was present with his Chief, whom he came to view with a loyal devotion short only of that which he had at first accorded to Sidney. In this remorseless man, of stern fixed religious faith and unshrinking sense of duty, working single-handed amidst the backbiting of evil tongues, a new conception dawned on the poet's conscience, and a new character found its way into his verse. In the fifth book of the "Faery Queene" Artegal is the portrait of Lord Grey; Irena is Ireland, Pollente is Desmond. One after another iniquity is redressed by the resistless energy of the knight and the terrible prowess of Talus his iron man; nor does the poem ever rise to a higher strain of moral grandeur than where Sir Artegal, heroic and successful, taking leave of delivered Irena, is yet assailed by the two hags, Envy and Detraction, and snarled on by the Blatant Beast. Lord Grey was recalled, but Spenser remained behind, to discharge various

offices of a more or less lucrative kind, to receive at last in 1586 a grant of some 3,000 acres, with the manor and castle of KILCOLMAN.

A venerable fortress, standing in a romantic dale; clad in rich waving woods and sheltered by the hoar hills of Mole and Arlo; two silver streams, the Molanna and the Mulla, winding through diversified grounds to feed a lake in which the gray towers of the castle are reflected; such is the Kilcolman of Spenser and his biographers, an ideal colouring of an ideal canvas.

A black mass of wall, nine feet in thickness, standing on a bare mound of limestone rock and flanked by a shapeless pond half overgrown with weeds; a wide plain of peat bogs extending drearily all around until they rise into brown, naked moorland hills; the silver streams of Spenser, of Drayton, and of Mickle, shrunk to a pair of wretched rivulets, miles distant from the ruined castle, choked with stones, and waterless for half the year; such is the Kilcolman of reality as it presents itself to the disillusioned pilgrim. For Spenser wielded the spell which was stolen by the Elfin Page from the book of Michael Scott. In the alchemy of his imagination a cobweb became tapestry, a hazelnut a gilded barge, a hut a palace. He who could paint cruel, selfish Dudley as the stainless, peerless Arthur; who could see in Elizabeth, wrinkled, old, affected, treacherous, sensual,

The beam of beauty, sparkled from above,  
The floure of virtue and pure chastitee,



The blossom of sweet joy and perfect love,  
The pearl of peerless grace and modesty,

found it an easy task to plant the barren demesne of exiled Desmond "with myrtle trees and laurels freene," and to make an earthly paradise, on paper, out of the savage desolation of his Munster home.

It is a dismal place to-day, as one sees it from the high road near Buttevant, at the foot of the Galtee range. In Spenser's time it was surrounded probably by woods, masking to some extent the bogs which it overlooked; and his fancy did the rest. He settled down delightedly into the peace and leisure of his new home, to embark in earnest upon the supreme work of his literary life, conceived seven years before, already strictly meditated and in part commenced, his poem of the "Faery Queene." By the year 1589 enough had been composed to be laid before a distinguished visitor to Kilcolman, Walter Raleigh. For seven years Raleigh had basked in high Court favour; but the death of his friend Leicester and the ascendancy of his enemy, Essex, brought him into disgrace. He left London, and coming to look after his large grants in the south of Ireland, paid a visit to his neighbour Spenser. Parts of the new poem were read to him; his practised genius saw at once its splendid merit; by his advice Spenser took it to London; a publisher was found, the leading courtiers were conciliated, a dedication to Elizabeth was prefixed, and in December, 1589, but

with the date 1590, just two hundred years after the "Canterbury Tales" had been given to the world, the first three books of the "Faery Queene" were published. Its author reaped immediate celebrity, such as few men live to enjoy. The great Queen smiled upon him, quoted his lines on Gloriana, gave him fifty pounds, which economical Treasurer Burleigh managed not to pay, and all her brilliant circle hastened to salute and to caress the first of living poets. Imagination kindles as we dwell upon the scenes and the society in which all at once the quiet Irish exile found himself. We think of each courtly Mæcenas on the steps of the throne, Cumberland and Southampton, and Hatton and Oxford, and Ormond and Essex; of the famous ladies whose bright eyes rained influence on genius no less than on valour—at once, as Milton says, on Wit and Arms; of the scholars, translators, critics who formed an outer circle, Puttenham and Gosson, Fairfax and Harrington, Lyly and Warner, laying aside their rivalries in the pleasure of measuring the new poet. We suppose the talk that sparkled in these gatherings; euphuistic quips and quiddities, anecdotes of the late Armada, of Drake's treasure ships, of Hakluyt's voyages and Mercator's Atlas; tales of Copernicus and Tycho Brahe, whose discoveries were coming on men's minds with the shock which geology and evolution occasioned half a century ago to the elder amongst ourselves; citations from the new Arcadian Romance, long handed round in manuscript, recently printed in a splendid folio.

We can imagine Gabriel Harvey, now Doctor of Laws and an important London Quidnunc, carrying his friend on Sundays to hear his old school-fellows Richard Hooker at the Temple or Bishop Andrewes at St. Paul's; can see him on week-days at the Globe playhouse, sitting amongst the selecter company on stools upon the stage, the stage where Heywood's "Pardoner and Frere," and Peele's pretty pastoral "Arraignement of Paris," and Marlowe's truculent "Tamburlaine" and terrible "Faustus" were being acted, and where amongst the spectators, or possibly among the actors, may have been Will Shakespeare's self, not long come up from Warwickshire to town. All these experiences were doubtless Spenser's, but he had others of a less delightful kind. What hopes of advancement he may have nursed, or what personal applications he may have made, we are not told; but his disappointment at their failure, and his disillusioned estimate of the jealous intrigues and rivalries underlying the showy surface of Court life have been penned in bitter lines:

Full little knowest thou, that hast not tride,  
What hell it is in suing long to bide:  
To loose good dayes, that might be better spent;  
To waste long nights in pensive discontent;  
To speed to-day, to be put back to-morrow;  
To feed on hope, to pine with fear and sorrow;  
To have thy Princes grace, yet want her Peeres;  
To have thy asking, yet wait many yeeres;  
To fret thy soule with crosses and with cares;  
To eate thy heart through comfortlesse dispaire;  
To fawne, to crowche, to waite, to ride, to ronne,

To spend, to give, to want, to be undone.  
Unhappie wight, borne to disastrous end,  
That doth his life in so long tendance spend.

He returned to Ireland at the end of 1591, to woo, win, celebrate in an unparalleled Wedding Ode, the wife of whom we know nothing but that her name was Elizabeth, that she was a country lass, and was married to him on the day of Barnabee the Bright, June 11th, 1594. His pen, though busy with a continuation of the "Faery Queene," made time for lighter work; for a poetical history of Raleigh's visit, of his own London experiences, his vision of the Queen and Court, his disappointment and return. In 1595 he again journeyed to London with the Fourth, Fifth, Sixth Books of the "Faery Queene," which were published together with a second edition of the first three; returning home so soon as the transaction was completed. And now his future seemed assured; he was famous, rich, happy; his children were growing round him; his love for Kilcolman was increasing, and his great work occupied him—when a single night dashed all his prospects to the ground. The Tyrone rebellion burst; his home lay close to the centre of the insurrection; his castle was sacked and burned, his youngest child perished in the flames. He escaped and fled to England, where in the opening of 1599 he died, broken-hearted and in poverty, to be buried near the grave of Chaucer in Westminster Abbey, at the expense of the Earl of Essex. Thirty years later the monument

to his memory was raised by Anne, Countess of Essex; falling into decay, it was restored in 1778 by his old Cambridge college, with this still legible epitaph:

Heare lyes (expecting the Second comminge of our Saviour Jesus Christ) the Body of Edmond Spencer the Prince of Poets in his Tyme. Whose Divine Spirrit needs noe other witsse then the works which he left Behinde him.

He was borne in London in the yeare 1553 and died in the yeare 1598.

His last six books had either not been written or were destroyed in the burning castle, but in 1609 a single canto of the Seventh Book was found and added to the rest. Its subject was the Mutabilitie of Human Life: "all things steadfastness do hate and changed be"; the mutilated close of his poem pointing the same moral with the untimely ending of his life.

He is said to have been a little man, who wore short hair, a little band, and little cuffs. There are two pictures of him at Pembroke; another in the possession of the Earl of Kinnoul at Dupplin Castle; another in Lord Chesterfield's collection.

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*Rischgitz photo.)*

SPENSER'S TOMB IN WESTMINSTER ABBEY.

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## MINOR POEMS

OF the poems attributed to Spenser earlier than 1579 nothing except the titles has been preserved. His first notable production, stamping him as the New Poet, and marking an adequate effort at the revival of English verse as revealed two hundred years before by Chaucer, we have seen to be "THE SHEPHERDS CALENDER," published in 1579-80 by Hugh Singleton, "in twelve Æglogues proportionable to the twelve monethes." It bore no author's name, was dedicated to Sir Philip Sidney, with a Commentary and Introductory Letter by E. K., known now to be Edward Kirke, Spenser's fellow student at Pembroke-Hall. In estimating this, as in all other of Spenser's poems, let us begin by admitting that it was artificial. For it was the product of a time and of a society in which life was a brilliant masquerade,

With pomp, and feast, and revelry,  
With masque, and antique pageantry,

naked simplicity an unpardonable indecorum. In Elizabeth's Court all was unreality. She herself was a sham, loving to be called the Queen of Beauty long after middle age had planted



crowsfeet in her face; posing as the chaste Diana while she stooped to flirt with every handsome young Endymion whose feet led him to her Latmos. The fine ladies and gentlemen round her were a sham; they moved and spoke like actors in a play, conspiring to make believe that life was all Arcadian, all "turneys and trophies," knight-errantry and love-making; the men all victorious and brave, the women all chaste, innocent and lovely. And so the culture of the age reflected its conventionality; English habits were too vulgar, English words too coarse, English models and imagery too savage for artistic and poetic rendering: the spirit which had humbled Spain and was colonizing a New World might only appear upon the literary stage in a classic or a mediaeval mask.

Hence, no doubt, the Pastoral mould in which Spenser cast his lesser poems. It bore the stamp of many mints. To the Grecian poets, Theocritus, Bion, Moschus, it was a genuine presentment of Sicilian shepherd life; was then recast by Virgil in an artificial and sometimes an allegorical form, with exquisitely polished language such as no shepherd could ever have expressed. To the earlier Poets of the Renaissance its allegorizing was as attractive as its melody; the *Bucolics* of Virgil were copied by Petrarch, Marot, Ronsard, and became text books in the grammar schools along with the not less popular *Eclogues* of Baptiste Spagnuoli, who under his better-known name of Mantuanus is affectionately quoted by the pedant Holofernes

in "Love's Labour Lost." His cult passed to England: "Could the learned," says Lodge, "bear the loss of Homer, or our younglings the writtings of Mantuan?" In 1563 a volume of Eclogues was published by Barnabee Googe; and, thus induced, the Muse of Spenser impeded her wing in the "Shepherd's Calender," the title taken from a curious almanac, meteorological, practical, and moral, then and long afterwards popular amongst real shepherds and agriculturists. This homage to fashion, which increased the popularity of his poem at the time, impairs it somewhat amongst ourselves; we must season our ears to the shepherds' prattle, our eyes to the uncouth names of the shepherds' selves, before we can taste the undoubted sweetness of the verse. The poems, though all in pastoral style, are on unconnected topics and in varied metres. Three of them, I, III, VI, are amatory, bepraising the charms or bewailing the cruelty of some shepherd maid. The lass is Spenser's unknown first love; of the shepherds, Colin Clout—a name borrowed from Skelton—is Spenser himself; Hobbinol stands for Harvey. The Sixth Eclogue contains a tribute to Chaucer:

The God of Shepheards, Tityrus, is dead,  
Who taught me homely, as I can, to make.  
He, whilst he livèd, was the soveraigne head  
Of shepheards all that bene with love ytake:  
Well couth he wayle his woes, and lightly slake  
The flames which love within his heart had bredd,  
And tell us mery tales to keep us wake,  
The while our sheepe about us safely fedde.

Nowe dead he is, and lyeth wrapt in lead,  
 (O! why should death on hym such outrage shoue!)  
 And all hys passing skill with him is fledde,  
 The flame whereof doth dayly greater growe.  
 But, if on me some little drops wuld flowe  
 Of that the spring was in his learned hedde,  
 I soone would learne these woods to wayle my woe,  
 And teache the trees their trickling tears to shedde.

Three of the Eclogues are polemical. V, adapted from the "Ploughman's Tale" of Langland, is an invective against Popery, with an apologue of the Kid who was decoyed and devoured through the "craft coloured with simplicitie" of the Fox. VII is an attack on the High Church bishops, alluding sympathetically to Algrind, the Puritan archbishop Grindal, Spenser's old patron, at the time under a cloud of royal displeasure; while IX is again passionately anti-Popish. In II, Thenôt, an old shepherd, repeats a lively fable of the Oak and Briar, which he professes to have learned from Tityrus, that is, Chaucer. VIII is a pretty imitation of Virgil. Perigot and Willy, like Menalcas and Damœtas, contend for a prize, to be adjudged by a third shepherd, Cuddy. No poem of this time could fail in its tribute of flattery to the Queen; and we get it in IX, where Hobbinol sings a song made by Colin "amongst his wonted songs wherein he all outwent" in praise of Great Eliza:

Tell me, have ye seene her angelick face  
 Like Phoebe faire?  
 Her heavenly haveour, her princely grace  
 Can you well compare!

The Redde rose medled with the white yfere, (together)  
In either cheeke depeinct lively chere;  
Her modest eye,  
Her majestic  
Where have you seene the like but there?

The Sun blinks, the Moon shrinks abashed,  
to behold her beauty. God Pan her father—  
King Henry—her mother Syrinx—Ann Boleyn  
—rejoice to have given her birth. The Graces  
dance, Calliope and the Muses play their violins  
around her throne, etc., etc., etc.—and Great  
Eliza swallowed and enjoyed it all. Profuse in  
eulogies on Eliza, our poet knew also how to  
praise himself. In XII imitated from Clement  
Marot, he says:

Fro thence I durst in derring-doe compare  
With shepheards swayne whatever fedde in field;  
And, if that Hobbinol right judgement bare,  
To Pan his owne selfe pype I need not yield:  
For, if the flocking nymphes did follow Pan,  
The wiser Muses after Colin ranne,

on which frank self-laudation his friend E. K.  
remarks that if Horace, a poet "of great wit and  
learning yet of no so great weight and importance,"  
could boast of his verse as of a monument  
outlasting bronze, Spenser is not to be  
"envied" in saying that he hath made a Calen-  
dar which shall endure as long as time. Eclogue  
X is copied from Theocritus, and has been called  
a prelude or prognostication of the "Faery  
Queene"; while XI, a dirge on the death of  
Dido, some unknown lady of high rank, was the  
poet's own favourite.

To philologists the poem yields a rich supply of curious words. We may instance *tottie* for what we call "shaky," *rather* used as an adjective, *rathe* as an adverb; *galage*, our modern "galosh"; *basket* for nosegay, "my dear *bor-rowe*," my pledge or suretie, used for Christ. They illustrate no less the profuse citation of wild flowers with which the Elizabethan poets inlay and decorate their verse:

Bring hither the pinck and purple Cullambine,  
     With Gelliflowres;  
 Bring Coronations, and Sops in Wine,  
     Worne of Paramoures;  
 Strowe me the ground with Daffadowndillies,  
 And Cowslips, and King cups, and loved Lillies:  
     The pretty Paunce,  
     And the Chevisaunce,  
 Shall match with the fayre flowre Delice.

Sops in Wine are clove pinks; Kingcups are buttercups; the Paunce is the pansy; the Chevisaunce the stock; the Flowre delice, the fleur-de-lys, or wild iris. The lines remind us of the vernal flowers, "the quaint enamelled eyes," with which Milton strews the laureate herse of Lycidas. They form no solitary instance of the influence exercised on the younger by the elder poet. The student of Milton's lyrical verse finds everywhere words, phrases, turns of thought, which show his familiarity with and reverence for Spenser. The words *bestead*, *purpled*, *flounced*, *weeds* (for garments), *sere*, *rathe*, *daunt*; the epithets in *hoar* hill, *dewy* sleep, *oaten* reed; the *green shops* of the silkworms; the phrases *squint*

*suspicion* and *Day's garish eye*; the introduction, so angrily resented by Dr. Johnson, of Peter among the heathen deities, as of Dido among the Saints; the invocation of Christ under the name of Pan; the solemn personifying of Contemplation; the abrupt anathema on the hireling clergy, who leave the hungry sheep unfed while themselves care only for the shearing feast; all occurring in "Comus," "Lycidas," or the shorter poems, first meet us in the "Shepherd's Calender"; a practical homage to its excellence before which criticism bows its head. The style of the Eclogues is uniformly elegant; the verse flowing and harmonious, with occasional pleasing changes into a minor key, the complicated metres handled with increasing skill. Their reception ratified the judgement of the three friends: men saw in them the opening of a new epoch in English poetry: the age of gold foretold by Erasmus had arrived. Countless imitators paid the tribute of their flattery: in Eclogues Peele sang the praise of Essex, Watson the death of Walsingham; dead Astrophel, Sir Philip Sidney, was bewept by a host of brother shepherds. Drayton wrote Eclogues pastoral and theological, modelling his pretty "Dow-sabel" at once on Chaucer and Spenser. The "Passionate Shepherd," the "Shepherd's Garland," the "Affectionate Shepherd," are all by forgotten writers of the closing century. Fletcher's "Faithful Shepherdess," Ben Jonson's "Sad Shepherd," Browne's "Britannia's Pastorals," and "Shepherd's Pipe," attest the re-

verberation of the chord which Spenser was the first to strike in England. "Dead Shepherd," says Shakespeare, apostrophising Marlowe in "As You Like It." Phineas Fletcher wrote his "Piscatory Eclogues" in 1633; Milton's "Lycidas" drove his flocks afield, and his Attendant Spirit in "Comus" wore the Shepherd's weeds. So late as Queen Anne's reign Pastorals were continued by Ambrose Phillips, and laughed out of court by Pope. Shepherds finally diversified the canvases of Lancret and Greuze, capered or languished in Gobelin tapestry and Dresden china, played part in the frolic masquerades of poor Marie Antoinette, whose beautifully designed artistic milk-pails are still preserved among the treasures of Mentmore.

In "COLIN CLOUT'S COME HOME AGAIN" the pastoral machinery is still preserved. The shepherd Colin tells his master how, while keeping his sheep among the green alders by the Mulla shore, he was visited by a strange "Shepherd of the Ocean," who heard and praised his pipe, grieved that he should waste it on the sheep-folds, persuaded him to cross the sea, and "wend with him his Cynthia for to see." So the Shepherd led him to Cynthia; Raleigh introduced him to the Queen. She, receiving him kindly, is painted with the glowing imagery of the Canticles; her courtiers, under disguising names, are endowed with every versifiable excellence. The shepherds naturally ask why, finding grace in royal altitudes, Colin should have left those beatific visions, "and back re-



*Emery Walker photo.*]

[*National Portrait Gallery.*

SIR WALTER RALEIGH.





turned to this barren soil." Then he shows the reverse of the picture; the falsehood, back-biting, malice, selfishness, which condition court advancement and shoulder out patient merit. The shepherds ask if Love resides at Court or is confined to woods and pastures: the answer is a splendid rhapsody on Love and Beauty, ending with a tribute to his Rosalind, who figures now for the last time in his poetry and passes out of his life.

"MOTHER HUBBERD'S TALE" is a satiric portraiture of the times, under the form of a Tale related to the Poet in sickness by an ancient dame. The Fox and the Ape set out upon their travels, resolved to beg their way, since beggars alone amongst mankind are lords and freemen. A farmer meets them and takes them into his service; they slay and eat the lambs, decamping when the time comes for them to give account. They next disguise themselves as priests, and, instructed by a brother of the cloth, obtain a benefice; their misdemeanours bring the bishop upon them, and they are compelled once more to take flight. By the counsel of a mule they procure rich garments and seek preferment at Court. Here they delude and rob young foolish gallants, are detected by the nobler sort, and banished. Roaming through the forest they find the Lion asleep, filch his crown, sceptre, and hide; the Ape, in these borrowed plumes, is received as monarch by the foolish beasts, whom he oppresses and misuses, till Jove sends Mercury to interfere: the Fox escapes by a cun-

ning plea; the Ape is shorn of his long ears and tail, and has gone thus ever since. The story is in imitation of Chaucer, and is more truly Chaucerian than any later English poetry. The wit and satire are brilliantly sustained; the swing of the verse never halts; its picture of the times, especially of priests and courtiers, is vivid, earnest, often passionately scornful.

A collection of smaller poems was brought out in 1591 by William Ponsonby, publisher of the *Faery Queene*. "THE RUINES OF TIME" is a eulogy on Sir Philip Sidney, on Leicester, Leicester's brother Ambrose, Earl of Warwick, and on his sister, Sidney's mother. There is a digression in praise of good "Melibœ," Sir Francis Walsingham, and some bitter lines on Burleigh, Spenser's lifelong enemy. "THE TEARS OF THE MUSES," written about the same time, contains one notable passage:

And he, the man whom Nature self had made  
To mock herselfe, and truth to imitate  
With kindly counter under mimic shade,  
*Our pleasant Willy*, ah! is dead of late:  
With whom all joy and jolly meriment  
Is also deaded, and in dolour drent.

There can be little doubt that our pleasant Willy is Shakespeare, who, having for some reason ceased temporarily to write, is said to be dead of late, "sitting in idle cell." "ΜΥΙΟΠΟΤΜΟΣ, or the Fate of a Butterfly," relates the adventures of Clarion, a gaudy Insect, who, setting forth on a summer's day in all his painted bravery, is entangled in a spider's web

and slain. A somewhat solemn dedication to the poet's kinswoman, Lady Carey, points to a hidden meaning, not now to be discovered. "VIRGIL'S GNAT" is a translation of the Latin poem anciently attributed to Virgil. A shepherd boy lies asleep; a serpent is about to attack him; a gnat stings him in the eyelid and awakens him. He beats off the serpent, but instinctively crushes the gnat. The gnat in a dream reproaches him, and he erects to it a tomb which he decorates and inscribes. DAPHNAIDA, a sweet and graceful elegy, commemorates under the name of Daphne a Lady Douglas Howard. "ASTROPHEL" is in honour of Sir Philip Sidney. In a series of eighty-eight SONNETS he describes the progress of his courtship to the lady who became his wife; and with these we may class the exquisite EPITHALAMION on his own wedding day; a less fine PROTHALAMION, a nuptial Ode to two noble brides; with four "HYMNS TO LOVE AND BEAUTY." Of the hymns two are religious, two Platonic, perhaps Lucretian. The Sonnets, if we cannot agree with Drummond of Hawthornden in calling them "childish" are, in point of fire and spirit, inferior to those of Sidney, far below Shakespeare's. It is a second, not a first love that he is celebrating; we have an artist building rime, not a lover emitting passion. And the lady seems to divine as much:

For when I pleade, she bids me "play my part,"  
And when I weep, she says "Teares are but water,"  
And when I sigh, she says "I know the art,"

And when I waile, she turns herself to laughter.  
So do I weepe and waile and pleade in vaine,  
While she as steele or flint doth still remaine.

The "Epithalamium," or Wedding Ode on his marriage, is one of the few pieces which we can venture, without fear of contradiction, to call perfect:—perfect in its exuberant joyousness, in its prodigality of picturesque images, in its mingling of the real with the ideal, of sacred with profane; in its rapturous yet delicate sensuousness; in that strange influence of subtlest melody, through which the lines seem to bear us on, as a flowing stream bears a boat upon its bosom. Challenging critics of his other poems bend before this in reverential homage: his staid biographer, Craik, calls it "The noblest marriage ode ever sung"; Dean Church sees in it "the finest composition of its kind in any language"; M. Jusserand, far from complimentary at times, rises into lyric rapture over its inspired grace, simplicity, and harmony. It is early dawn, and the Bride still sleeps: waken her, ye nymphs, tell her that "the wished day is come at last, and strew with fragrant flowers the church path which her feet must tread:

Wake now, my love, awake, for it is time;  
The rosy morne long since left Tithone's bed,  
All ready to her silver coche to clyme,  
And Phœbus gins to show his glorious hed.  
Hark! how the cheerefull birds do chaunt their layes,  
And carroll of Loves praise.  
The merry Larke his Mattins sings aloft;  
The Thrush replyes; the Mavis descant playes:

The Ouzell shrills; the Ruddock warbles soft;  
So goodly all agree with sweet consent  
To this days merriment.

She wakes! let the Virgins that be her fellowes  
beare her company and "helpe quickly her to  
dight." She is ready to come forth; and the  
minstrels tune their merry musicke; damsels  
play upon the timbrels, boys shout Hymen Io  
Hymen through the streets. She issues from her  
chamber, clad all in white:

Tell me, ye Merchants daughters, did ye see  
So fayre a creature in your towne before;  
So sweet, so lovely, and so mild as she,  
Adorn'd with beautyes grace and vertues store?  
Her goodly eyes like Saphyres shining bright,  
Her foreheads ivory white,  
Her cheekes lyke cherries charming men to byte,  
Her snowy neck like to a marble towre,  
And all her body lyke a pallace fayre,  
Ascending up, with many a stately stayre  
To honors seat and chastities sweet bowre?  
Why stand ye still ye virgins in amaze,  
Upon her so to gaze,  
Whiles ye forget your former laye to sing,  
To which the woods did answer, and your eccho ring?

She enters the church, with trembling steps  
and humble reverence; the priest blesseth her  
"with his two happy hands"; the angels who  
hover round the altar forget their service that  
they may gaze upon her while the red roses  
flush up in her face. She returns from church;  
the wedding-feast is spread, the bells are rung,  
the "bone fiers" lit; it remains only that the  
long day shall end, the evening star appear, the

night arrive; that Venus, Cinthia, Juno, remembering their own delights of yore, may descend propitious and benign to bless the genial bed. The high mood of the poem never slackens; it stands out as amongst the grandest of English lyrics. Of the lady thus immortalized we know only that she was named Elizabeth, that she survived her husband, married again, and quarrelled with Spenser's sons over his inheritance.

He could sing as a poet, he could also frame clear prose as an official. Some time after his death appeared his "View of the Present State of Ireland," composed about 1596. It is full of curious observation and personal knowledge, with gleams of political insight; but it starts from the premise which has vitiated through all time the English attitude towards Ireland, an assumption that English rule was right, Irish resistance criminal. He is unable to imagine the natural feeling towards their conquerors of an enslaved yet untameable population; he can see in them only "rebels"; explains the persistent failure of English rule and the invincible native resistance as the "fatal destiny of that land, that noe purposes, whatsoever are meant for their good, will prosper or take good effect; which thing, whether it proceed from the very Genius of the soyle, or influence of the starres, or that Almighty God hath not yet appoynted the time of her reformation, or that He reserveth her in this unquiet state still for some secret scourges which shall by her come into England, it is hard to be known, but yet much to be

feared." Fatality, the soil and stars, the unrevealed purposes of God;—these, and not English cruelty, rapacity, injustice, prejudice, were proclaimed the source and the continuance of Irish misery and of English failure. Three centuries have passed; and English eyes are not yet couched, Irish hearts not healed; still the same vice unredeemed of estimate and treatment besets the conquering and embitters the conquered race. We have felt and feel to-day its lingering penalty; it fell on Spenser's head with swift immediateness. Even while he wrote these words revolt was creeping round from Ulster to Connaught, from Connaught into quiet Munster with its English settlements, undertakers, landlords. The storm burst in December, 1598; and Spenser fled from his burned and ruined home, to perish, we know not certainly how or where; the most illustrious though not the only victim, in that time or since, to the vengeance of an infuriated nation.



## THE FAERY QUEENE

ALL the works hitherto enumerated we may read and know, yet not have read Spenser; for we shall have still to read "The Faery Queene." The poet seems to have conceived it very early as the great creation of his life, and to have seen that the pastoral machinery with which he had preluded hitherto, was inadequate to its expression. Looking round upon the literature of his age, not on the rare books chained to library shelves, but on the *read* books, books lying in the hall window of the country house, handled and thumbed by men and women, he saw three-fourths of them to be Romance. In Laneham's curious account of Queen Elizabeth's visit to Kenilworth, he mentions a certain Captain Cox, famous for his collection of books, and gives a list of them. They are all either ballads like the "Nut-Brown Maid and Adam Bell," or romances such as "Huon of Bordeaux," "Bevis of Hampton," the "Book of Arthur." This last was the most popular of all. The Arthurian legend, originating in Brittany, reduced to writing by Nennius, a Breton monk, in the ninth century,<sup>1</sup> amplified by Geoffrey of Monmouth

<sup>1</sup> So says M. Aubertin in his "History of French Literature"; another theory brings the tales into France

in the twelfth century, receiving later still its accretions of the "Round Table," the "San Graal," the loves of "Tristan and Iseult," had been condensed by Sir Thomas Malory into the single work known to us as the "Mort d'Arthure." Its continuous hold on poetic imagination is shown by the facts that Milton, in choosing the theme of his life's work, hesitated long between the "Death of Arthur" and the "Fall of Man"; and that our greatest recent poet lavished his mature power on the lives and deaths, the sins and sorrows, the valour and the happiness of Elaine and Lancelot, Enid and Belvidere, Galahad and Guinevere and Arthur. Spenser's poem then should be a Romance, and it should rest, like the epics of his great Italian contemporary and predecessor, on the three pillars of Chivalry, Gallantry, Religion. But to these he added a fourth, namely, Allegory. The "Round Table" involved an equality of interest attaching to all its heroines and heroes; and this precluded the central figure and the central argument necessary to epic precedent; he would bind his characters together in a moral unity and endow them with a moral chief. Sir Guyon and Sir Calidore and Sir Scudamore and Sir Artegal should be not only gallant knights pricking o'er the plain and bearing foes out of the saddle, but Christian virtues clad in the whole armour of God and fighting against spiritual antagonists.

not from Brittany, but from Wales or perhaps Strathclyde.

Aristotle had, in his system of philosophy, devised twelve moral virtues; each of these should be represented by an Arthurian knight, whose adventures might fill a book; while Aristotle's crown and perfection of all the virtues, Magnanimity, or, as Spenser calls it, Magnificence, should be personated by King Arthur himself, the devoted lover of the Faery Queene or Glory, whose mission it should be to come in at the close of each Book, and rescue its hero from his difficulties. The plot is consistent and intelligible; had it been carried out, it must have been intolerably dull. We can feel sustained and thrilling interest in a Tristan or a Lancelot, contempt for a Braggadocio, loathing for a Mordred; we cannot follow Holiness or Chastity or Justice through their spiritual ups and downs, or feel more than conventionally solicitous for their final triumph. The "Pilgrim's Progress," indeed, we read and read again; but by throwing overboard its moral altogether, by deeming of Christian and Faithful and Neighbour Pliable and old Honesty and Mr. Greatheart as genuine flesh and blood, forgetting the spiritual frailties or nobilities which they represent except so far as these enter into their visible human mechanism. And this Spenser must have felt; for his moral disappears so completely from the first, that no reader could have guessed its nature had not he himself explained it. Allegory there is, indeed, abundantly, and that perhaps the finest element in the poem; but as regards the moral virtues this much only is kept up, that the conceit of each

Book is indicated in its first page, and recalled in its last: all between is an exercise ground for the poet's genius, on which the stores of his vast reading and his bursting fancy career without a system and without a check. Each item lacks a subject, lacks a hero, lacks an argument, lacks a plot; it revolves without advancing. As in the earlier Elizabethan dramatists, incongruities and anachronisms crowd its pages: Saracens of the Crusade encounter Homeric nymphs; abstractions from the "Roman de la Rose" salute ladies of the English Court, Christian giants jostle pagan gods; the Mount of Olives is coupled with Parnassus, Siloam and Jordan with Bath and Spa, the water which swerved from the lips of Tantalus washes Pilate's hands. Figures appear and disappear, returning when we have ceased to remember who they are and why they ran away. Twenty sets of lovers episodically vary the narrative and adorn the page; for if Holiness, Temperance, Chastity, are inscribed over temple gates, the interior presiding deity is not unfrequently Venus. The lovers, however, do not always move in pairs: they are separated by violence, or accident, or necromantic arts, or by cross currents of temporary preference; the bereaved ones ride alone, or the wrong couples come together for a time; and when at last the appropriate knight and lady are delivered from ogre's castle or Amazon's hold or magician's den, and every Jack once more has his Jill, we have clean forgotten the original partnerships, and are not much affected by their renewal.

Let no one, therefore, sit down to the "Faery Queene" with the idea that he can thread the story, or hope to follow the adventures of any single hero through any single Book. Book I is the most epical and the least devious of all; it has only five confusions, and only three episodes foreign to the argument. In the other Books these succeed one another with bewildering frequency, each so interesting as to drive the last out of a reader's head, all so intermixed with similarity of adventures and of names that to take up and hold the clue argues a brain too mathematical to appreciate the poetry. Not less forlorn is he who proposes to grasp the allegory. We are instructed that the "Faery Queene" is Glory: suddenly we find her representing Queen Elizabeth. So by and by does Belphoebe, so does Medina. Arthur is now Magnificence, now the Earl of Leicester; Duessa is in one canto Falsehood, in another, Mary, Queen of Scots; Orgoglio is first Pride, then King Philip. Sometimes all pretence at moral allegory is abandoned, and we find ourselves reading history. Sanglier is Desmond, Paridel and Blandamour are the two northern earls, Grantorto is the Irish rebel force, Sergis is Ormond. Presently Burbon stands for Henry IV, Geryone with his three bodies is Spain with Holland and the New World. Calidore's love for Pastorella signifies Sidney's wooing of Frances Walsingham; the disgrace of the page Timias with Belphoebe represents Elizabeth's displeasure against and imprisonment of Raleigh after his own secret marriage in 1593.



THE EARL OF LEICESTER.

From a miniature by Nicholas Hilliard.



By and by the interpretation is theological: Duessa, already carrying a double meaning, becomes the Church of Rome, and rides on a many-headed beast, betraying her victims to Orgoglio, who now appears as Antichrist. To this inextricable complication of characters, scenes, and meaning, is due no doubt the imperfect popularity of the "Faery Queene." People attempt to "read it through," to follow the story, pursue the personages, understand the moral; weary and disillusioned they give up, as Macaulay says, before half the First Book is read. Not even the student, far less the general reader, may venture to approach it thus. It is to be read for pure enjoyment, amid conscious leisure, and with a mind at ease—taken up and opened here and there as whim directs, read if possible aloud, so better to keep pace with the slow, deliberate march and the even flow of the stately nine-line stanza. Many a perusal, such as this, can seasoned readers of Spenser gratefully recall, when beneath the shade of summer trees, or by a winter fireside while rocking winds were piping loud without, they gave themselves up to the magician's spell: saw castle and drawbridge and giant; saw fierce tournament of mace and spear and sword; saw heavenly Una with her milkwhite lamb, and gentle Charissa with her babes, and errant Damosel, and Salvage Man, and Squire of Dames, and Talus with his iron flail, and Marinell riding on the rich strand strewn with diamonds and pearls; followed Britomart into the church of Isis, and Sir Guyon



into Mammon's Cave, and Scudamore in his quest after the Shield of Love, and Serena freed by Calepine from Cannibals. They will murmur over the especial lines, sweetest where all is sweet, purple patches sewn on cloth of gold, which they lingered on when first they read and which haunt their memories still; the lay of the opening rose, and the cloud of summer gnats, and the rainbow's melting hues; the apostrophe to the Angels, and Venus's search for love in court, city, country, forest; and Una's joy at recovering her knight, and Phaedria's sermon on the text "they toil not neither do they spin." Rightly to enjoy a single episode, almost a single stanza, is to have found the key to Spenser: once applied, it will not be allowed to rust unused. "The charm of the 'Faery Queene,'" says the most judicious of the author's critics, "resides more than that of any other author in single passages. It is in truth a vast picture gallery, with this advantage, that it addresses itself to the ear as well as to the eye, and is at once both colour and music."

And though the poem does not yield a series of coherent stories, we can yet trace such current of sequent narrative and adventure, as may differentiate the several Books, and yield clear mastery of each. In Book I the Red Cross Knight sets out with Una, his betrothed lady, to destroy a dragon which infests her home, keeping in terror her aged parents and their people. Driven by a storm into a wood, they encounter a vile monster, Error, whom the knight slays,

and they rest for the evening at a little lowly hermitage, whose master entertains them with pious talk:

With faire discourse the evening so they pas;  
For that olde man of pleasing wordes had store,  
And well could file his tongue as smooth as glas;  
He told of Saintes and Popes, and evermore  
He strode an *Ave-Mary* after and before.

He was, in truth, a vile magician, and through his spells the knight, persuaded that Una is false to him, leaves her and goes on, she following him alone. Our attention is now divided between the two. Una meets a lion, who fawns upon and follows her; she is captured by a Paynim Sansloy, but rescued by a herd of Satyrs, who worship her as a divinity, and whom she teaches. After further trials she encounters Prince Arthur and is safe. Meanwhile the Red Cross Knight has taken up with a sorceress, Duessa, whose companion, Sansfoy, he has slain; is beguiled by her into drinking of an enchanted spring, and while enfeebled by the draught is seized by a Giant, Orgoglio. Prince Arthur delivers the Knight, strips the false Duessa of her disguise, and unites the severed pair. But their troubles are not over: they approach the den of Despair, surrounded by the bones of wretched men whom "the villain" had persuaded to self-slaughter:

That darksome cave they enter, where they find  
That cursed man low sitting on the ground,  
Musing full sadly in his sullein mind.  
His griesly lockes, long growen and unbound,  
Disordered hung about his shoalders round,

And hid his face, through which his hollow eyne  
Lookt deadly dull, and stared as astound.  
His rawbone cheekes through penurie and pine  
Were shronke into his jawes, as he did never dyne.

The knight upbraids and prepares to slay him,  
but the "miscreaunt" justifies himself with moving speech, exhorting to self-destruction as the only issue from life's miseries, struggles, sins:

Who travailes by the weary wandering way,  
To come unto his wished home in haste,  
And meetes a flood that doth his passage stay,  
Is not great grace to helpe him overpast,  
Or free his feet that in the myre stick fast?  
Most envious man, that grieves at neighbour's good,  
And fond, that joyest in the woe thou hast!  
Why wilt not let him passe, that long hath stood  
Upon the bancke, yet wilt thyself not passe the flood?

He there does well enjoy eternall rest  
And happy ease, which thou dost want and crave,  
And further from it daily wanderest:  
What if some little payne the passage have,  
That makes frayle flesh to feare the bitter wave,  
Is not short payne well borne, that brings long ease,  
And layes the soul to sleepe in quiet grave?  
Sleepe after toyle, port after stormie seas,  
Ease after warre, death after life, doth greatly please.

The knight rouses himself to argue, but is no match for the sophistries of Despair. He becomes at length in love with death, and taking from the tempter's hand a dagger "sharpe and keene," is about to plunge it into his breast when Una snatches it from his hand, reminding him that God is loving, that mercy seasons justice, that repentance blots out sin. With entreaties and

reproaches she drags him away; but she sees him to be enfeebled and spiritually decadent, and guides him to the House of Holiness, prototype of Bunyan's House Beautiful, where he undergoes religious chastening; then, restored and regenerate, proceeds to Una's home, slays the dragon, replaces on their throne the aged parents, is happily wedded to his Una. Between the spiritual and political allegories of the romance, we may take our choice. In the first we have a Pilgrim's Progress. The knight is the Christian; Una, Gospel Truth; his desertion of her, Spiritual Fall; Duessa, Heresy; Archimago, Hypocrisy; Sansfoy, Unbelief; Orgoglio, Spiritual Pride reacting into Despair; the House of Holiness, Spiritual Discipline; the Dragon, Satan; Arthur, Divine Grace. Or we may follow, as Spenser certainly intended us to do, the political parable. In this the knight stands for the Englishman of the period; Una is the English Church; Duessa, Mary of Scots; the Dragon, Rome; Archimago, the Jesuits; Sansfoy, the Moslems; Orgoglio, Philip; Arthur, Lord Leicester. The first interpretation would appeal to the religious feeling of the time, the second to the high-born soldiers, statesmen, courtiers, who saw, in the characters glorified or libelled, men and women personally or patriotically admired or detested by themselves.

Book II contains the adventures of Sir Guyon, representing Temperance, who rides forth accompanied not by a lovely lady, but by a "comely Palmer," a sage and sober sire, to

whose measured footsteps he accommodates the paces of his steed. His mission is to discover and destroy the bower of Acrasia, a wanton and malignant Circe, who, seducing gallant knights to her toils by sensual baits, slays them or transforms them into beasts. Many adventures await him on his way. He finds in a wood a lady lying on the ground, bleeding to death from a self-inflicted wound. Beside her lies a dead knight, her husband, poisoned by Acrasia's spells; on her knees is a living babe. She dies; the pair are reverently buried, and the infant preserved, by Sir Guyon and the Palmer. But meanwhile the knight's horse is stolen by a boastful coward, Braggadochio, the comic character of the poem, supposed to represent with his squire, Trompart, the Duke of Alençon, and Simia, his *petit singe* or minion. We part from Guyon for a time to follow this losel, and to encounter the female warrior, Belpheobe, whom we shall often meet again. Returning, we find Guyon combating a savage madman, Furor, with his mother Occasion, a loathly hag, with shaggy locks hanging from the front of her head, but significantly "bald behind." He overcomes and binds them, beats down their champion, a fierce knight, Pyrocles, and passing on comes to a wide river, on whose bank is moored a "little gondelay," its sole navigator a lady fresh and fair. She invites him in, but so soon as he has set foot on her boat shoots it far away from land before the Palmer can follow. Her name is Phaedria; she is a handmaid and emissary of Acrasia. She



**QUEEN ELIZABETH**

From a pencil drawing by Isaac Oliver.



smiles upon and courts the knight ; he suspects her laughing freedom, and, "with strong reason mastering passion frail," persuades her after a time to restore him to the shore. The Palmer, however, is no longer to be seen. The knight visits Mammon's cave; its squalid master in vain offers him great store of the untold wealth that lies heaped around. During three days and nights he follows Mammon through the labyrinths of his subterranean magazine, beset by hideous fiends prepared to seize upon him should he touch the proffered gold; is at last dismissed by the disappointed money god so weak and worn with his three days' fast and wandering, that on reaching the upper air he falls down in a swoon. Here the Palmer finds him, watched over by an angel sent from above to succour him. This, the only angelic apparition in the poem, is heralded by noble lines: ✓

And is there care in heaven? and is there love  
In heavenly spirits to these creatures base?  
There is: else much more wretched were the cace  
Of men than beasts. But O! th' exceeding grace  
Of highest God, that loves his creatures so,  
And all his workes with mercy doth embrace,  
That blessed Angels he sends to and fro,  
To serve to wicked man, to serve his wicked foe.

How oft do they their silver bowers leave,  
To come to succour us that succour want!  
How oft do they with golden pineons cleave  
The flitting skyes, like flying Pursuivant,  
Against fowle feendes to ayd us Militant!  
They for us fight, they watch and dearly ward,  
And their bright Squadrons round about us plant;



And all for love, and nothing for reward.  
O! why should heavenly God to men have such regard?

But the angel spreads "his painted nimble wings" and vanishes away, just as Pyrocles, the swooning knight's late vanquished adversary, comes up to despoil him of his armour. The moment has arrived for the interposition of Prince Arthur; he slays Pyrocles, recovers Sir Guyon, and they set off together for the House of Temperance that the knight may gain strength for his crowning adventure. This episode is purely allegorical; it represents Humanity in soul and body; is peopled partly with physical faculties, partly with moral and spiritual excellences. It comprehends foes in the shape of the seven deadly sins; their captain, Maleger, is the classical Antaeus, whom Arthur slays, as did Hercules, by squeezing the life out of his body, and flinging it not to his restorative mother, Earth, but into a deep lake. Refreshed and reinforced the knight sets sail; steered by the Palmer he voyages through a roaring sea, past the Gulf of Greediness, the Rock of Vile Reproach, the Wandering Islands, the Quicksand of Unthriftiness, the Whirlpool of Decay. Richly laden ships lie wrecked about their course, but the boat presses on. Phaedria sits upon a rock and cries to them for succour, mermaids flaunt and sing alluringly, hideous beasts and fowls waylay them; but through it all they pass, and reach the Bowre of Blisse. On this Spenser has lavished all his powers of voluptuous description. Sweetest music

imprisons the ear, wanton maidens tempt the eye.

Eftsoones they heard a most melodious sound  
Of all that mote delight a daintie eare,  
Such as attonce might not on living ground,  
Save in this Paradise, be heard elsewhere:  
Right hard it was for wight which did it heare,  
To read what manner musicke that mote bee:  
For all that pleasing is to living eare  
Was there consorted in one harmonee;  
Birdes, voices, instruments, windes, waters, all agree.

The joyous birdes, shrouded in chearefull shade,  
Their notes unto the voice attempted sweet;  
Th' Angelicall soft trembling voyces made  
To th' instruments divine responce meet;  
The silver sounding instruments did meet  
With the base murmure of the waters fall;  
The waters fall with difference discreet,  
Now soft, now loud, unto the wind did call;  
The gentle warbling wind low answered to all.

Then follows the exquisite simile of the rose, translated almost literally from Tasso, imitated by Jeremy Taylor. The Virgin Rose at first peeps forth with bashful modesty, displays next her bared bosom, then fades and falls away.

So passeth, in the passing of a day,  
Of mortall life the leafe, the bud, the floure;  
Ne more doth florish after first decay,  
That earst was sought to deck both bed and bowre  
Of many a lady and many a Paramowre.  
Gather therefore the Rose whilst yet is prime,  
For soone comes age that will her pride deflowre;  
Gather the Rose of love whilst yet is time,  
Whilst loving thou mayst loved be with equall crime.

Not quite unscathed does Guyon pass through all these voluptuous seductions. His senses are lulled, his continence for a moment weakened, his heroic virtue sapped; but the Palmer rebukes his roving eyes and yielding fancy; he bravely shakes off the dangerous enchantment, breaks up the bower, imprisons Acrasia, restores to human shape the beasts, once lovers of the sorceress, then by her transformed. Critics have been found to arraign as inartistic Guyon's transient yielding, to proclaim it monstrous that an impersonation of Temperance should descend, in inclination though not in conduct, from the heights of sexual austerity. With deeper philosophic instinct Milton, in a noble passage, justifies the hero's lapse on the ground that unknown evil is not goodness, unfelt temptation yields no moral choice, therefore no final victory.

I cannot praise a fugitive and cloistered virtue, unexercised and unbreathed, that never sallies out and sees her adversary, but slinks out of the race where that immortal garland is to be run for not without dust and heat. Assuredly we bring not innocence into the world, we bring impurity much rather: that which purifies us is Triall, and Triall is by what is contrary. That virtue therefore which is but a youngling in the contemplation of evil, and knows not the utmost that Vice promises to her followers, and rejects it, is but a blank Virtue, not a pure; her whiteness is but an excrementall whiteness: which was the reason why our sage and serious Poet Spenser, whom I dare be known to think a better teacher than Scotus or Aquinas,

describing true Temperance under the person of Guyon, brings him in with his Palmer through the Cave of Mammon and the Bowre of Earthly Blisse, that he might see, and know, and yet abstain.

Book III tells the tale of Britomart, the Warrior Virgin. Riding full armed in manly guise with her aged squire, she meets Prince Arthur and Sir Guyon, the latter of whom, with uncalled for and uncourteous hostility, rides against her, and is sharply overthrown. The poet is supposed to shroud under this unusual episode a conflict between the Queen and Essex. The three, however, go on in friendship together, till they see a lady flying from the pursuit of a griesly forester. The two knights pursue the lady; Arthur's squire, Timias, attacks the forester; Britomart, feeling no interest in "the fairest dame alive," rides on alone. She halts before a stately castle, in front of which are six warriors besetting a single knight. She disparts them forcibly, and inquires the cause of the unequal fight. It appears that the castle is ruled by the lady Malecasta, whose servants compel every visitor to forswear his own true love, and transfer his affections to their mistress.

Certes, says she, then beene ye sixe to blame  
To weene your wrong by force to justify;  
For knight to leave his lady were great shame  
That faithful is, and better were to dy.  
Ne may love be compeld by maistery;  
For soone as maistery comes, sweet Love anone  
Taketh his nimble winges, and soon away is gone.

We recall Pope's adaptation of the lines in his *Eloisa*:

Love, free as air, at sight of human ties  
Spreads his light winges, and in a moment flies.

The faithful lover in this case is our old friend the Red Cross Knight; with Britomart's help he overthrows the six, who, laying down their arms, conduct the victors to the castle. Here Malecasta falls in love with Britomart, believing her to be a man. Complications ensue, the lady's sex is revealed, and the two visitors leave the castle. As they journey, Britomart tells her history. She had seen in a magic mirror the figure of a noble knight, had fallen in love with the counterfeit presentment, had learned from the magician Merlin that his name was Artegall, and was roaming the world to seek him. The two part in friendship, and Britomart pursues her way, soon to be defied by and to strike down Marinell, son to a sea-nymph, Cymoent, who, hearing of her son's overthrow, carries him for tendance to her home beneath the waves, in a passage borrowed from Virgil's "Aristaeus and Cyrene." We return to the fugitive lady whom we left Sir Guyon and Arthur pursuing. Her name is Florimell; she is in love with and is seeking Marinell, and her adventures, of a startling kind, are pursued through five cantos, during which we lose sight of Britomart. Two more are devoted to a somewhat unsavoury tale, of the rich old churl, Malbeco, and his beautiful but worthless wife; and we then once more find the

“warlike virgin” succouring a forlorn Sir Scudamore, whose beloved Amoret, twin sister to Belphoebe, is imprisoned by a great enchanter, Busirane. Britomart enters his hold, overpowers and binds him, and liberates Amoret, but only to find that Scudamore has disappeared.

The theme of Book IV is Friendship, as shown in the tale of Cambel and Triamond; but we do not come to it for some time. Britomart had liberated Amoret, but her lover Scudamore has disappeared; and the two ride together, poor Amoret divided between gratitude to her deliverer, and timidity at finding herself alone with and in the power of a strange knight, a dilemma not relieved by Britomart, who from time to time roguishly simulates masculine advances to her fair and shy companion. They meet two knights, Paridel and Blandamour, companied by two ladies, seeming honourable and beautiful; but one of them is Duessa, the other Ate or Dissension, vile creatures both in fair disguise. Blandamour charges Britomart, and is flung to the ground; she rides on disdainfully. Presently comes Scudamore in search of Amoret; him Paridel attacks and is overthrown; but Ate tells Scudamore that his love is false and has given herself to a strange knight, and he flees away miserable. Paridel and Blandamour are on their way to a grand tournament, and overtake Cambel and Triamond, accompanied by Canace and Cambina, their “two lovers dear.” Invoking Dan Chaucer, “well of English undefiled,” who had left their adventures unfinished in his

"Squire's Tale," Spenser tells how Cambel and Canace were brother and sister, and how, when she was sought in marriage by throngs of knights and barons bold, yet felt no preference for any, he proposed that she should fall to whichever of these could conquer him in fight. Amongst these knights were three brethren, Priamond, Diamond, Triamond, sons to a fairy, Agape. Two of them are slain by Cambel; while he is fighting with the third, Triamond, their sister Cambina appears, drawn in a magic car by "two grim Lyons." She reconciles the combatants, saves her brother, and presently falls in love with Cambel.

So Triamond had Canace to wife,  
With whom he led a long and happy life;  
And Cambel took Cambina to his fere,  
The which as life were to each other lief.

It appears that the four are, like Paridel and Blandamour, bound for the proclaimed tournament; and the six join company. The contest at the jousts is for the rich jewelled girdle of Florimel, dropped by her when escaping from the monster whom, in Book III, Satyrane slew. It is to be presented by the victor to the fairest lady there. This brings in a favourite fiction of the time, familiar to most of us through the ballad of "The Boy and the Mantle," in Percy's "Reliques." The girdle can be worn only by a dame of "chaste love and wifehood"; and from one lady after another who tries it on it shrinks and falls away, amid the titters of the gentlemen.

It is found at last to fit the gentle Amoret "withouten breach or lette," and she bears it away in company with Britomart, whose sex she has accidentally discovered.

Meanwhile, poor Sir Scudamore, a jealous and miserable man, is ranging the world in search of his supposed rival. He meets Sir Artegal, equipped as a "Salvage Knight"; the two fraternise, and by and by find Britomart, who has by some accident unexplained been separated from Amoret. She unhorses Scudamore, and is hotly attacked by Artegal. They fight long and furiously, till he shears away her "ventail"; and at sight of her lovely face his sword falls from his hand and he renders himself her captive. In him, when unhelmeted, she recognizes the knight of Merlin's magic glass. She strives with womanish art to conceal her feelings for him; "but so well he wooed her and so well he wrought her with fair entreatie and sweet blandishment," that she accepts him as her betrothed.

But where is Amoret all this time? Carried off by a horrible savage, she has been saved from him by Belpheobe, yet not without a series of untoward mischances which make necessary the appearance of Prince Arthur. He solves the difficulties, but even he cannot bring the story to an end without three more digressions. First Scudamore tells us how he won the love of Amoret; then long-lost Florimell is discovered at the house of Proteus, where are assembled all the sea-gods for the wedding of Thames and Medway. She is restored to her lover Marinell,



but finds him sick and languishing through an  
unhealed wound which he had received from  
Belphoebe. The sight of his lady revives him ;

For soone as he beheld that angels face  
Adorn'd with all diuine perfection,  
His cheared heart eftsoones away gan chace  
Sad death, revived with her sweet inspection,  
And feeble spirit inly felt refection ;

while the lady responded more deliberately but  
with equal tenderness :

Ne lesse was she in secret hart affected,  
But that she masked it with modestie,  
For fear she should of lightnesse be detected :  
Which to another place I leave to be perfected.

And so we end what is perhaps the most labyrinthine of all the Books.

Book V is professedly historical ; the legend of Artegal or Justice. A distressed lady, Irena, is dispossessed of her heritage by a powerful tyrant, Grantorto : she complains to the Faery Queene, who sends Sir Artegal to deliver her. Irena is Ireland, Grantorto personifies the "rebels," or perhaps Desmond himself, Artegal is Lord Grey, sent to Ireland as Lord Deputy in 1580. He is presented by the goddess Astraea with an irresistible sword, Chrysaor, and is accompanied by an yron man called Talus, "who in his hand an yron flaele did hould, with which he threshed out falshood and did truth unfould." A long series of adventures postpone the appointed task. Artegal overthrows Sang-

lier, supposed to represent Shan O'Neal, storms the castle of the giant Pollente, intended possibly for Charles IX, destroying him and his daughter Munera. Travelling on, he is arrested by a vast concourse of people, on the seashore, listening to the talk of a giant standing on a rock, in his hand a huge pair of scales, in which he claims to have weighed the order of Creation and the lot of human kind. All, he declares, are out of balance; land encroaches on water, sea on land; no less have realms and nations run awry; made equal at the first, men had become slaves or masters. He proposes, after careful weighing of the right and wrong, "all things to reduce into equality":

Tyrants, that make men subject to their law  
I will suppress, that they no more may raine;  
And lordings curb that commons over-aw,  
And all the wealth of rich men to the poor will draw.

Nothing under the sun is new: it is curious to see the French Encyclopaedists of the eighteenth century foreshadowed by this Tom Paine of the sixteenth. The lordings of Queen Elizabeth's time had a short way of dealing with demagogues and their converts. Artegal first reasons with the giant in the language of the Almighty to the patriarch Job, or, more closely still, of the Archangel Uriel to the prophet Esdras;<sup>1</sup> then, when the reformer maintains his

<sup>1</sup> Second Book of Esdras, chapter iv.

ground, Talus "tumbles" him off the rock and breaks his bones, scattering with his flail, like a swarm of flies, the "rascal rout" which resented their prophet's fall. The *leit-motif* of the episode appears to be that God ordained the native Irish to be serfs and the English to rule them; and that it is the duty of religiously-minded men to tumble down any one objecting to this dispensation.

Irena has still to wait through several cantos. Her deliverer pauses to attend the marriage of Florimell to Marinell, is then captured by the Amazon Radigund, who falls in love with her prisoner. To his relief comes angry Britomart, pausing on her way to pay devotion at the Temple of Isis, whose deity vouchsafes a favourable vision; then slays Radigund and liberates her lover. They sadly separate on their several quests; Artegal is joined by Arthur, and the pair attack and destroy a Soldan, representing Philip of Spain. The combat portrays the great Armada conflict; the Soldan rides in a lofty chariot—the colossal Spanish galleys; it is armed with iron hooks—the instruments of torture for the English heretics carried by the priests on board; he blasphemously swears and banns—the excommunicatory anathemas of the Pope; his car is "drawn of cruel steedes which he had fed with flesh of men"—indicating the cruelties of the Inquisition. Pausing on their farther way to do homage at the court of Mercilla, they find her sitting in judgement on a very notable criminal:

Then was there brought as prisoner to the barre  
A Ladie of great countenance and place,  
But that she it with foule abuse did marre.  
Yet did appeare rare beautie in her face,  
But blotted with condition vile and bace,  
That all her other honour did obscure,  
And titles of nobilitie deface.  
Yet in that wretched semblant she did sure  
The peoples great compassion unto her allure.

The criminal is Duessa, who has figured as a mischief-monger throughout the poem, and is now arraigned as having conspired with the knights Paridel and Blandamour to deprive Mercilla of her crown. A "sage old sire" pleads against her, and her guilt is manifest; but Mercilla is touched with noble pity, lets fall "few pearling drops," and rises without pronouncing judgement. The parable is obvious: Mercilla is Elizabeth, the "now untitled Queene" is Mary, Paridel and Blandamour the two Northern Earls, the sage old sire is Burleigh. The sentence, we know, was for a long time deferred:

Till strong constraint did her thereto enforce,  
And yet even then ruing her wilful fall  
With more then needfull naturall remorse,  
And yeelding the last honour to her wretched corse.

While the two knights tarry at Mercilla's Court, comes an embassy from the Lady Belge, widowed of a noble husband, and mother of seventeen fair sons, twelve of whom had been devoured by a three-bodied tyrant, Gerioneo by name, and herself expelled from her home. Arthur undertakes the enterprise, and guided

by Belge's messenger, comes first to a fair city which has been taken from the lady and entrusted to a merciless but valiant Seneschal. Arthur slays the Seneschal, encounters Gerioneo, who had hastened to avenge his deputy, pierces his three bodies, demolishes finally a monster whom he had been wont to feed on the carcasses of his victims. The allegory is again transparent: Belge means the Low Country with its seventeen provinces, twelve of which were seized by Philip. He is Gerioneo, his three bodies are Spain, the Netherlands, the Indies. The Seneschal is Alva, the monster is the Inquisition, Arthur is Leicester.

We now return to Artegal, bending his way to the seacoast on whose other side Irena lives. On his way he meets a rude rout of brutish men, some of whom are carrying off a lady, the rest assailing the knight her comrade; he has lost his shield, and is in deadly peril. Arthur and Talus make short work with the rabble; but the lady, whose name is Flourdelis, shows no alacrity to rejoin her knight, Burbon, until urged thereto by Artegal. Burbon is Henri Quatre; Flourdelis, France; the rabble, the mob of Paris. The lost shield represents Henry's change of faith, for which Artegal severely rates him, Burbon cynically answering that he may perhaps find it again some day. At last Artegal crosses the sea, slays Grantorto, reinstates Irena and rectifies her kingdom; assailed as he returns homeward by two ill-favoured hags, Envy and Detraction, and their attendant monster the

Blatant (or Bellowing) Beast. While these symbolize primarily the malicious attacks on Lord Grey after his return to England, they are supposed to have reference also to the bitterness of the Presbyterians towards the Church of England; for Spenser, though a stalwart Protestant, was, as we have seen, no Puritan.

The hero of Book VI is Sir Calidore, representing Courtesy, and intended probably as a portrait of Sir Philip Sidney;—Sidney,

In whom it seemes that gentlenesse of spright  
And manners milde were planted naturall;  
To which he adding comely gaize withall  
And gracious speach, did steale mens hearts away:  
Nathlesse thereto he was full stout and tall,  
And well approv'd in batteilous affray,  
That him did much renowne, and far his fame display.

He sets out in quest of the Blatant Beast, but does not, until the close of the Book, discover it. For this is scarcely less tangled than Book IV; we are introduced to twenty-three new characters, and digression sprouts from digression in every fresh canto. Calidore first arrives at the castle of a lady named Briana. She loves a doughty knight, one Crudor, who refuses to return her affection until she has lined for him a mantle with knights' beards and ladies' locks. The same story is told, we remember, in another form, by little Sir Geoffrey Hudson to Julian Peveril. She employs a seneschal to waylay travellers and despoil them, and he now appears, dragging a fair lady by her yellow hair "with hand un-

blest." Calidore pursues him into the castle, slays him, overcomes Crudor, and compels him to marry Briana. He is next arrested by the sight of a goodly youth on foot fighting a fully armed knight on horseback, while a lady looks on. As he reaches them the youth has transfixed with a dart his antagonist, who falls dead; and the victor tells Calidore that the slain knight had just before treacherously wounded an unarmed knight and was misusing the lady when he interposed. They seek the wounded man, Aladine, and bear him to his father's castle near at hand, where they are gratefully entertained. Calidore dubs the youth a squire, and passes on, to come unexpectedly on two lovers solacing themselves in a shady grove with amorous talk. All three are disconcerted; but Calidore acquits himself with so tactful courtesy that the pair beg him to sit down and share their rest. The knight is named Sir Calepine, the lady Serena. She, bored apparently, like Eve with Adam and the affable archangel, by the conversation of the gentlemen, wanders off to gather wild flowers, and is seized and wounded by the Blatant Beast. Sir Calidore gives chase, compels the Beast to drop his prey, and pursues him out of sight, disappearing altogether from the story during five cantos following.

Calepine picks up the wounded dame, places her on his horse, and walks beside her to a distant castle. Its owner, Sir Turpine, churlishly refuses him admission, and severely wounds him. His life is in great jeopardy, when forth from the



**SIR PHILIP SIDNEY.**

**From a miniature by Nicholas Hilliard.**





forest issues a "Salvage Man," who rushes on Sir Turpine, and, though unarmed and naked, drives him off, and returns to staunch Calepine's wound "with a certain herbe"; then leads the unhappy pair, both now in evil plight, to his forest lair, there tending their wounds and feeding them with nuts and fruits. Serena he cannot cure, for the Beast's tooth was poisonous; but Calepine soon walks recovered. One day he sees a bear carrying in its mouth an infant, gives chase, takes up the child, and by a fortunate coincidence finding a lady who wrings her hands and weeps all alone because she has borne no children to her absent lord, Sir Bruin, persuades her to relieve him of the infant, whom, on her lord's return, she may present to him as her own. The episode is intended as a compliment to the family of MacMahon, descended, it was believed, from a bear through the Norman house of Fitzurse, both names signifying Son of a Bear. Serena is all this time left with the benevolent Salvage Man, until that ultimate good genius of knight errantry, Prince Arthur, appears, bringing his wounded squire Timias, whom he had plucked from the jaws of the Blatant Beast. He bears the two invalids, Serena and Timias, to a pious hermit's cell: the good man finds their wounds to be spiritual no less than corporal, and heals them by a course of godly discipline. Learning from Serena the infamy of Turpine, Arthur seeks him out and subdues him, sparing his life at the entreaty of his wife Blandina; but when the churl, fol-

lowing him at a distance, persuades two stranger knights to attack him, mercy has reached its limits, and the miscreant is hanged up by his heels. In his absence Serena falls into the hands of savages, who prepare to sacrifice her on the altar of their god, when Calepine comes by and saves her.

Of these two we hear no more, but turn once again to Calidore, whom we left long ago in chase of the Blatant Beast. He falls in with a troop of shepherds, and lives among them for a time; in their company is a beautiful shepherdess, Pastorella, who falls in love with Calidore. She is captured by "brigants": he delivers her, and bears her to Belgarde Castle, where she is discovered to be the long-lost daughter of Bellamoar and Claribel, lord and lady of the castle, supposed to represent the Duke and Duchess of Rutland. Finally Calidore captures, muzzles, and binds the Blatant Beast; but the monster eventually breaks his chain, and ranges still the world in undiminished malignity and strength.

To the third edition of the poem, which appeared in 1609, were added two fresh "Cantos of Mutabilitie, which, both for forme and matter, appear to be parcelle of some following book of the Faery Queene." Their discoverer and editor are unknown; they appear foreign to the plan of the poem, and are in a different key from anything in the first six Books; but their authenticity is incontestable. They personify Change or Mutabilitie as a beautiful and mighty Titanesse, challenging universal dominion over Earth

and Heaven, Time and Eternity, Life and Death; nay, over the Olympian gods and Jove himself. She appeals in support of her claim to Nature, as supreme above all created things: and, not on Olympus or Tabor, but on Spenser's own Arlo hill, before "this great grandmother of all creatures bred, great Nature, ever young, yet full of eld," the contending parties plead. As she assumes her state the seasons pass her in array: the months, the hours, day, and night, life, "like a faire young lusty boy," all bow to Mutability as their mistress. After long argument held, Nature sits for a while, her eyes fixed on the ground, amid awful silence and suspense, then gives her doom:

I well consider all that ye have said,  
And find that all things stedfastnesse do hate  
And changed bee: yet, being rightly wayd,  
They are not changed from their first estate,  
But by their change their being do dilate,  
And, turning to themselves at length againe,  
Do work their own perfection so by fate.  
Then over them Change doth not rule and raigne,  
But they raigne over Change, and do their states maintaine.

Cease therefore, daughter, farther to aspire,  
And thee content thus to be rul'd by mee,  
For thy decay thou seekest by thy desire;  
But time shall come that all shall changed bee,  
And from thenceforth none no more change shall see.

The lines have a personal ring; they perhaps anticipate, perhaps record, the dismal change amid which his own sun was doomed to set.

In a yet further fragment, his last recorded written words, we seem to find him, beaten down, yet not hopeless, measuring his own life's changes as a poet, a philosopher, a Christian; looking forward to that haven of all storm-tossed souls, where change shall turn to stedfastness and weariness shall find repose:

Then gin I thinke on that which Nature sayd  
Of that same time when no more change shall be,  
But stedfast rest of all things firmly stayed  
Upon the pillours of Eternitie,  
That is contrayr to Mutabilitie.  
For all that moveth doth in Change delight,  
But thenceforth all shall rest eternally  
With Him that is the God of Sabaoth hight:  
Oh! that great Sabaoth's God, grant me that Sabaoth's  
sight!

## THE SPENSERIAN SECRET

TO shirk such an estimate of the "Faery Queene" as we have tried to furnish, would be to leave the life of Spenser half complete; yet the recitation of its story goes to show that it has story none to tell; in its intricate plot and amid its shifting characters, we only do not lose our way because there is no way to lose. What, then, was the charm by which Spenser leapt at once into the front rank of English writers, was proclaimed a "Poet's Poet," was accepted as time went on—to take only the greatest names—by Milton, Dryden, Pope, Wordsworth? He wrote, we must remember, for the few; his work lacks the popular touch which so distinguished Chaucer. The "Canterbury Tales" paint types of every social class with sympathetic intimacy; the "Faery Queene" shows only dainty dames and knights of high degree in human kind, shows monsters no less aristocratic in the blazonry of Hell; while the "raskall rout," the common folk, appear on rare occasions, and then in a ludicrous or contemptible light. He looked for readers to the courtly patrons of the Renaissance—Sidney, Raleigh, Leicester—to the great Queen herself; to the

brilliant wits around her, Fairfax, Warner, Harrington, Chapman, amourist, patriotic, philosophical, who had tuned her Court into a nest of singing birds. He wrote for Lyly, Florio, poor Robert Southwell; for the three dissolute dramatists who had made Shakespeare possible; nay, for young Shakespeare's self, many of whose plays were acted before the second instalment of the "Faery Queene" appeared. We have seen (p. 32) Spenser's endearing notice of "our pleasant Willy"; Shakespeare, in his "Passionate Pilgrim," if it indeed be his, comparing music and sweet poetry, personifies poetry in Spenser:

Whose deep conceit is such  
As, passing all conceit, needs no defence.

And the lesser contemporaries dutifully echoed the master's note of praise. Meres in his "Palladis Tamia" classes the author of the "Faery Queene" with Homer; so does a greater writer, Drayton:

Grave moral Spenser after these came on,  
Than whom I am persuaded there was none,  
Since the blind bard his Iliads did make  
Fitter a task like that to undertake.

Bishop Hall ranks him above Ariosto and Du Bartas; Barnfield, known to us by lines long attributed to Shakespeare, recommends his own pretty poem, "Cynthia," as an attempt to imitate the master, Spenser. Nash calls him "Heavenly Spenser"; William Browne, a few years later, saw in him "the highest glory of the Muses";

later still, Cowley was made a poet by reading him. Yet popular, in the literal sense of the word, he was not then, and has not been since; editions of his works came forth very slowly; his great poem has never, as a whole, been translated into any foreign language: nay, in his own country it is probably true that, bearing the title of a great classic, he has more admirers than readers. Meanwhile, his rapturous acceptance by the few, and those the supreme literary judges who decide on immortality, is intelligible to all who have felt his charm. Stately to the level of his stately age, yet buoyant with unceasing movement, sweet with acute responsiveness to beauty, whether of natural sights and sounds, of moral character, of physical form, he invites and rewards from careful students not only the passive enjoyment of his music, but an analysis of his poetic secret.

Let us notice first the splendour of his imagery. His descriptions have no neutral tints; whether he portrays the passing of a hero or a heroine, a forest landscape or a palace hall, a tilt-yard or a temple shrine, there is the same rich yet appropriate sumptuousness of decoration and accessory. Each place, each person, wears ever, like Milton's Tragedy, its gorgeous dress of sceptered pall, the dress not of a mimic pantomime but of the highest and most polished art. Take, for example, the description of Queen Lucifera riding forth in state (I, iv), of Prince Arthur's first appearance (I, vii), of Belphebe (II, iii), of Phaedria's Isle (II, vi), of the Garden of Adonis (III, vi), whence



are born into the world all men and beasts and  
goodly flowers:

Shee brought him to her joyous Paradize,  
Wher most she wonne when she on earth does dwell,  
So faire a place as Nature can devize;  
Whether in Paphos, or Cytheron hill,  
Or it in Gnidus bee, I wote not well;  
But well I wote by triall, that this same  
All other pleasaunt places doth excell,  
And called is by her lost lover's name,  
The Gardin of Adonis, far renownd by fame.

Notice, too, the picture-writing in his allegorical impersonations, new to our literature, except for Sackville's fine but brief description of the company at Hell gate.

Here is Envy in the House of Pride:

And next to him malicious Envy rode  
Upon a ravenous wolfe, and still did chaw  
Between his cankred teeth a venomous toad,  
That all the poison ran about his chaw;  
But inwardly he chawed his own maw  
At neighbour's welth, that made him ever sad;  
For death it was when any good he saw;  
And wept, that cause of weeping none he had;  
But, when he heard of harme, he wexed wondrous glad.

\* \* \* \*

He hated all good workes and vertuous deeds,  
And him no lesse, that any like did use;  
And who with gracious bread the hungry feeds  
His almes for want of faith he did accuse.  
So every good to bad he doth abuse;  
And eke the verse of famous Poets witt  
He does backebite, and spightfull poison spues  
From leprous mouth on all that ever writt.  
Such one vile Envy was, that fite in row did sitt.

Read also his pictures of Mammon (II, vii), of Despair (I, iv), of the Vices, Ignorance, Idleness, Gluttony, Lechery, Avarice, Wrath, who draw Lucifera's car (I, ix), of the Maskers in Busirane's Castle, where Fancy, Hope, Desire, are painted with a lighter touch.

The artful use of similes is among the special claims of Homer, Virgil, and Milton; similes arresting by their own beauty, yet strikingly appropriate and arising naturally from the context. We may instance, out of many, the comparison of a "swarme of gnats at eventide" first to the monstrous brood of Error (I, i), then to the villains who besiege the House of Temperance in II, ix; of the rose freshened by rain to reviving Irene in V, xii; of the goshawk and eagle, to the giantess and squire in III, vii; of the wayward child's petulance to Britomart's anger when she learns that her lover is captive to the Amazon; of the returning mariners in view of land to Una rejoicing in her supposed reunion to the Red Cross Knight (I, iii); or the Miltonic narrative of the Giant's assault on Arthur.

As when almightie Jove in wrathfull mood  
To wreake the guilt of mortall sins is bent,  
Hurles forth his thundering dart with deadly food  
Enrold in flames and smouldring dreriment  
Through riven clouds and molten firmament;  
The fiers three forked engin, making way,  
Both loftie towres and highest trees hath rent,  
And all that might his angry passage stay;  
And, shooting in the earth, casts up a mound of clay.

We must not omit to mention the peculiar

softness of the diction, due to the many French words—pleasaunce, humblesse, esloyne (for withdraw), counterfesaunce, bellamy, paravaunt, emparlance, amenaunce—current in Spenser's day, and employed by him frequently in preference. It is observable, however, that he does not shrink from vulgar terms—hook or crook, hurly-burly, pell-mell, hugger mugger, mangy, snub; while he is so chary of play on words, in which Shakespeare revelled, that I can find only three puns in all the poem.

But, above all, it holds us by the strange, unbroken melody and music of the verse.

"The charm of the 'Faery Queene,'" says M. Jusserand, "arises from its full and ceaseless harmony; an assonance sustained, continuous, unwearying to the ear, like the sound of mighty waters, the fall of descending cataracts, or billows of the advancing ocean. Infinite in spectacular variety, his descriptions move always in the same grave collected style, redeeming often and exalting scenes which an almost imperceptible lowering of tone would have converted into riot and buffoonery. A graceful mastery of verse, in its grandeur even sometimes tending to monotony, a freedom of handling, a refinement at once unpretentious and unstudied, save him from those lapses into vulgarity, while they preclude those flashes of inspiration, which disfigure or intensify the magnificence of his great contemporary Shakespeare."

He had bent to fashion in his machinery; in diction and numbers he would trust himself. A devout admirer of Chaucer, he learned from that

great "well of English undefiled" what was possible to our English tongue: he took it up where Chaucer ceased, and carried it to a perfection which in this quality of continuous melodiousness has never been surpassed. He invokes him with the reverence of a disciple:

Then pardon, O most sacred happie spirit,  
That I thy labours lost may thus revive,  
And steale from thee the meede of thy due merit,  
That none durst ever whilst thou was alive,  
And being dead in vaine yet many strive:  
Ne dare I like; but, through infusion sweete  
Of thine owne spirit which doth in me survive,  
I follow here the footing of thy feete,  
That with thy meaning so I may the rather meete.

In this sense, and this alone, acceptance namely and pursuance of the potentialities revealed by Chaucer in our English language, he is to be called the successor of the master. A close imitator he certainly was not: apply the test of reading in immediate sequence passages from either poet, and we shall trace no such obligations in the verse of Spenser. Even his archaic words are only now and then adopted from Chaucer; I have found only sixty-one such in all his 35,000 lines, as used by Chaucer alone and not by Spenser's contemporaries. For I suspect his ear was even finer than Chaucer's; that he had in him a native musical power, belonging to Milton alone among other English poets, the capacity for becoming, but for the imperfect science and instrumentation of his time, a great musical composer. His keen sensitiveness to even un-

suspected harmonies of sound shows itself in many passages. Beethoven, when a child, danced to the dropping of water; and we think of this when we read of Morpheus lulled to sleep by "a trickling stream from high rock tumbling down"; of the silver-sounding instruments meeting the base murmur of the waterfall—an image many times repeated. So we notice in Guyon's voyage the big base of the resounding sea, with the treble of whistling Zephyrus, and the line, remarkable for the musical inscience of that day, "So discord oft in music makes the sweeter lay." Of specially melodious passages we may instance the hymn to Night (III, iv), the Lucretian hymn to Venus (IV, x), the sweet love lay sung by Phaedra (II, vi):

Behold, O man! that toilesome paines doest take,  
The flowrs, the fields, and all that pleasaunt growes,  
How they themselves do thine ensample make,  
Whiles nothing envious nature them forth throwes  
Out of her fruitfull lap: how, no man knowes,  
They spring, they bud, they blossome fresh and fair,  
And deck the world with their rich pompous showes;  
Yet no man for them taketh paine or care,  
Yet no man to them can his carefull paines compare.

The Lilly, Lady of the flowing field,  
The flowre-de-luce, her lovely Paramoure,  
Bid thee to them thy fruitlesse labors yield,  
And soone leave off this toylsome weary stoure:  
Loe, loe! how brave she decks her bounteous bour  
With silkin curtens and gold coverletts,  
Therein to shrowd her sumptuous Bellamoure,  
Yet neither spinnes nor cards, ne cares nor fretts,  
But to her Mother Nature all her care she letts.

Why then doest thou, O man! that of them all  
 Art Lord, and eke of Nature Soveraine,  
 Wilfully make thyself a wretched thrall,  
 And waste thy joyous howres in needlesse paine,  
 Seeking for daunger and adventures vaine?  
 What bootes it al to have, and nothing use?  
 Who shall him rew that swimming in the maine  
 Will die for thirst, and water doth refuse?  
 Refuse such fruitlesse toile, and present pleasures chuse.

Of this heavenborn melodious faculty the charm is for the most part nameless; yet we may perhaps trace some of the artifices by which it is sustained. Such are—1. The use of antithesis, coupled with repetition of the words used:

The wood is fit for beasts, the Court is fit for thee.  
 And where he hits nought knows, and whom he hits  
     nought cares.  
 Vain others overthrowes whom selfe doth overthrowe.  
 The trespasse still doth live, albe the person die.  
 Like did he never heare, like did he never see.

2. The heaping together of single unconnected epithets or nouns:

Fear, sicknesse, age, losse, labour, sorrow, strife,  
 Paine, hunger, cold.  
 Faint, wearie, sad, emboyled, grieved, hurt  
 With heat, toyle, wounds, armes, smart, and inward fire.

3. Free use of alliteration:

Dark, doleful, drery, like a greedy grave.  
 Who travels by the wearie wandering way.  
 To drive him to despaire and quite to quaille.

Come, come away, fraile, feeble, fleshly wight.  
A cloud of smothering smoke and sulphur seare  
Out of his stinking gorge foth steamed still.

His infinite variety of topic is due to his vast reading, and to his habit of pouring into his poem all the stores of his memory, regardless of the charge of theft. His debt to Skelton is noticeable. In him he found one of the few earlier English examples of allegory. It seems probable that the word Magnificence, applied by him to Arthur, was borrowed from Skelton's fine *Morality* so called; and his own pastoral title, *Colin Clout*, was Skelton's. Surrey's influence was very slight; I find a dozen words only taken apparently from him; to Sackville's *Induction* he owed, as we have seen, the machinery of one splendid passage. His obligations to Tasso are endless: *Britomart* is *Clorinda*, *Duessa* is *Armida*; the description of the wood in the opening Book, the shrouding of *Sansjoy* in a cloud, the *Bleeding Bough*; the song, the bathing girls, the lovers in the *Bower of Bliss*; the diamond shield, and the self-moving boat, are all from the "*Jerusalem Delivered*." The *Squire of Dames* and the *Soudan* are from Ariosto; the noble lines in I, v, descriptive of the rising sun, are word for word identical with a passage in Peele's "*David and Bethsabe*"; and the image of *Occasion's baldness* is from Marlowe.

If Spenser has borrowed freely, his successors have been proud to imitate him. Phineas Fletcher moulded his "*Purple Island*" on the allegory of the *House of Alma*; Butler owes

to him the name Hudibras; in the "Pilgrim's Progress" the fight of Christian with Apollyon is copied from St. George's combat with the Dragon; the architecture of the City of Mansoul in the "Holy War" is due to Spenser's House of Holiness. Even to Shakespeare he lends well-known phrases—"the sere and yellow leaf," "nature's cunning hand," "chewing the cud of sweet and bitter fancy." All these, we may be sure, seen in the great Poem, as its worshippers have seen ever since, not so much a storehouse of allegory or a reflection of Elizabethan times, as a consummate miracle of Art.

"Without calling Spenser," says Professor Craik, "the greatest of all Poets, we may still say that his poetry is the most poetical of all poetry. Other poets are all of them something else as well as poets, and deal in reflection, or reasoning, or wit, or humour, almost as largely as in the proper product of the imaginative faculty: his strains alone in the 'Faery Queene' are poetry, all poetry, and nothing but poetry."

Poetry has been defined as Passion expressing itself in verse; an epigram covering the two constituents of poetic Art, Imagination and Form; the inventive faculty which conceives great thoughts, the executant faculty which reveals them through every resource of language, through its vividness, proportion, melody. To the great Greek philosopher the intangible abstractions of the human soul, Truth, Justice, Purity, Courtesy, Love, were archetypal phan-



toms enshrined in the mind of God: for the Poet they become personages, who walk the earth in shapes of faultless beauty and with the sound of ever-varying yet perfectly regulated music. In this union of invention with expression Shakespeare discerned the quintessence of poetic Art: may not the fine evolution of his idea which he puts into the mouth of Theseus have reflected the impress made upon him, just when the new Poem was stirring all readers' minds, by its resplendent incarnation in the "Faery Queene"?

The Poet's eye, in a fine frenzy rolling,  
Doth glance from heaven to earth, from earth to heaven:  
And, as Imagination bodies forth  
The forms of things unseen, the Poet's eye  
Turns them to shapes, and gives to airy nothing  
A local habitation and a name.  
Such tricks hath strong Imagination,  
*That, if it would but apprehend some joy*  
*It comprehends some bringer of that joy.*



SIR FULKE GREVILLE.

AFTERWARDS LORD BROOKE.

From a miniature by Nicholas Hilliard.



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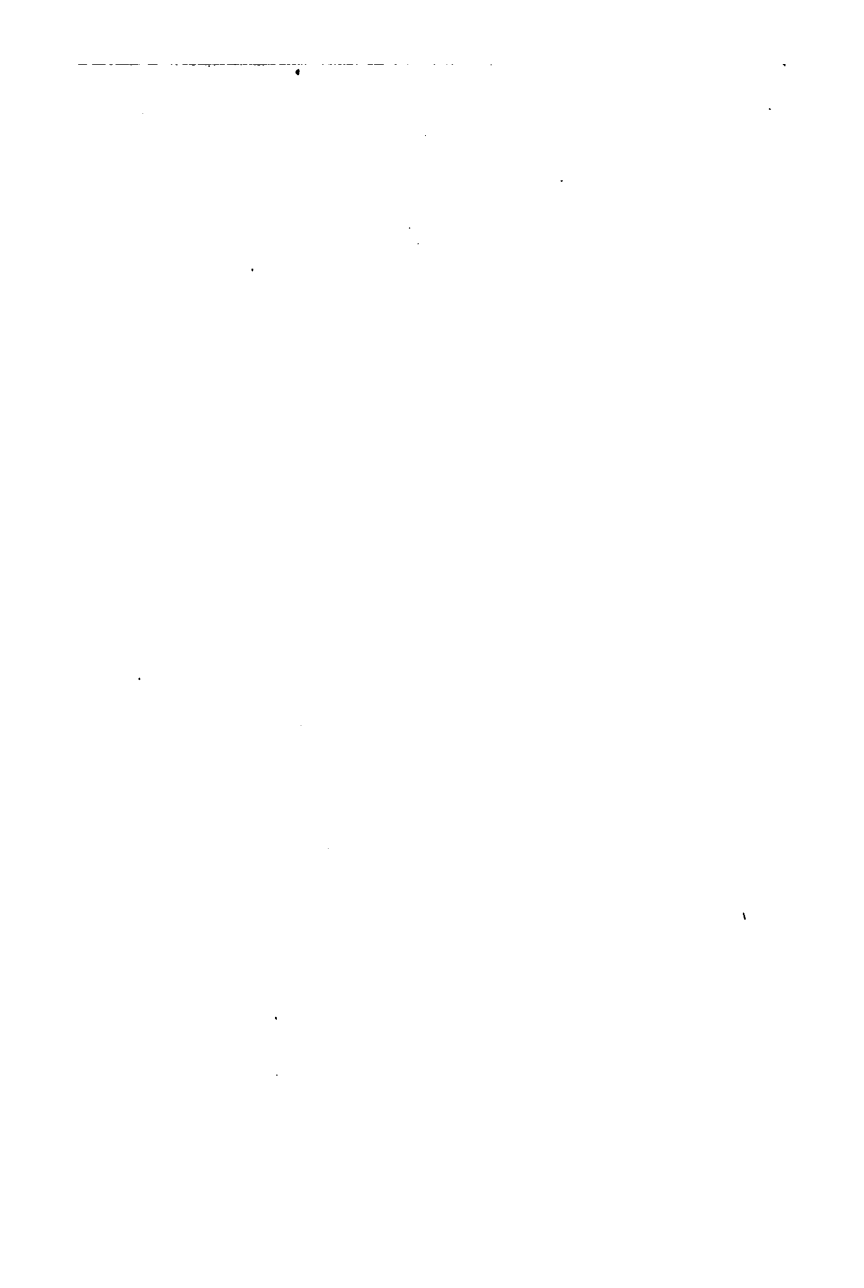
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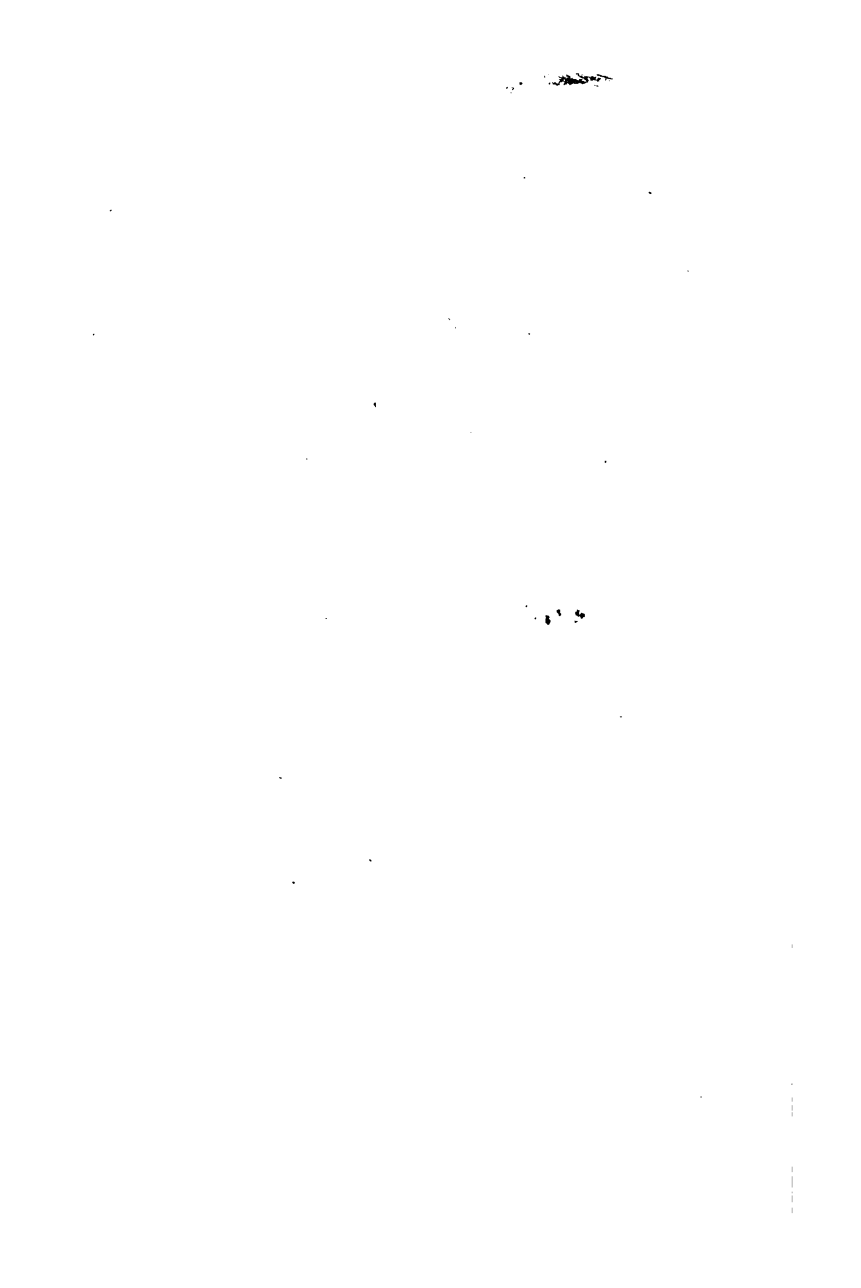
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